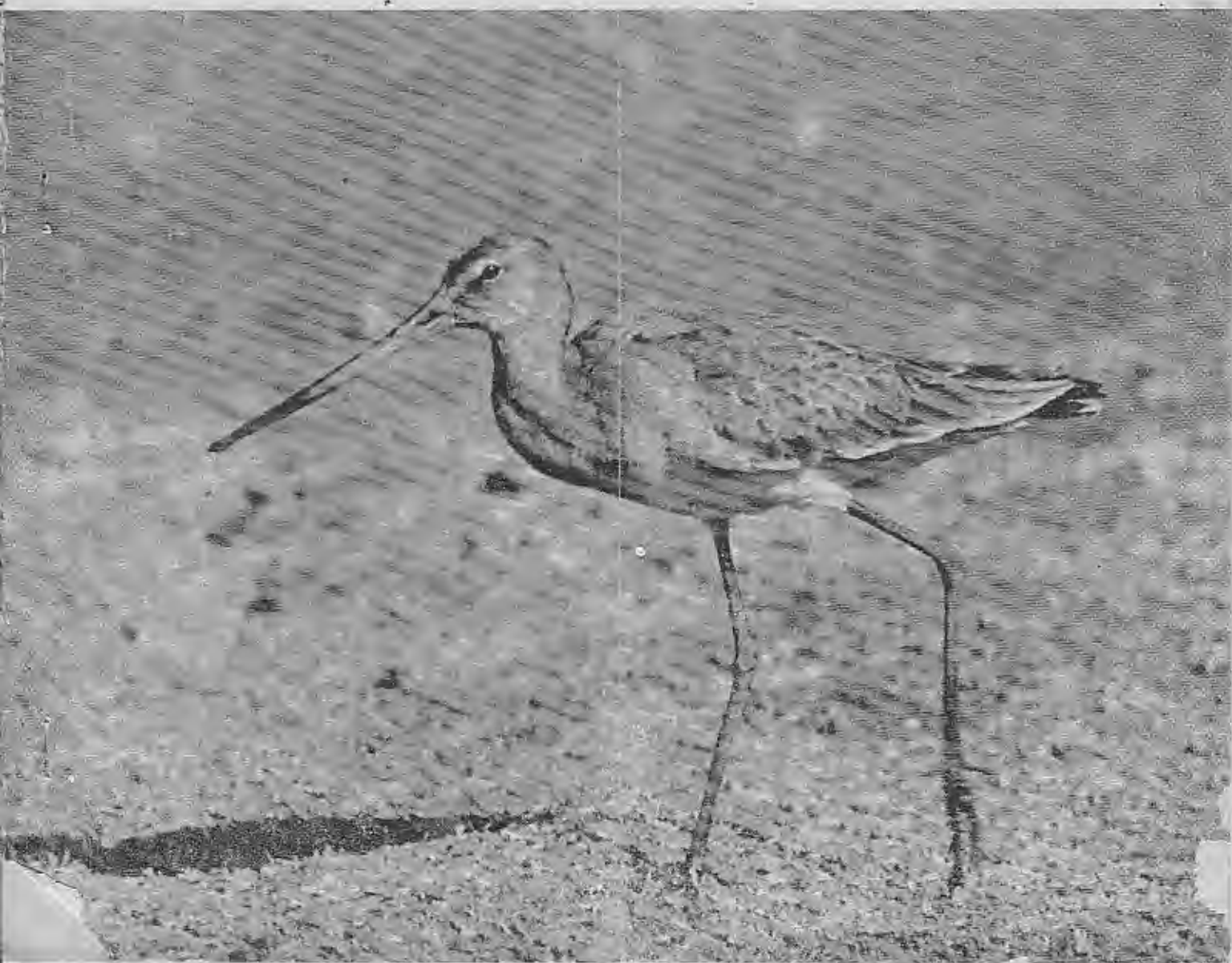


Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXI NO. 1 JANUARY 1981



NEWSLETTER
FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. XXI No. 1

January 1981

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Collins Handguide to the Birds of the Indian Sub-Continent by Martin Woodcock, 1980, Collins, London, 176 pages. illustrated (mostly in colour). Price (UK):£4.95.

Our Contributors

Unidentified Subscribers

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Errata

Editorial

Jaipur Birds: Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma has sent a note about birds found in various habitats in Jaipur. The habitat has been classified into thickly populated area, thinly populated area, gardens, agricultural fields, waste land, wetlands, and hilly areas. Altogether a 117 species have been recorded. The winter migrants include the Redshank, Greenshank, Green Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, River Terns, Rosy Pastor, Starling, Orphean Warbler, Indian Great Reed Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Bluethroat, Black Redstart, Yellow Wagtail, Grey Wagtail, White Wagtail. The only instance of a migrant coming in summer, and apparently not present in winter, is the Bluetailed Bee-eater.

Singing Competition: Arun Bhatia writes to say

"1. An American visitor told me of a 3 month long exhibition at Hong Kong Museum of History May-July, 1980 when seven volumes of John Gould's "Birds of Asia" first published in 1850 were on display. Different illustrations, hand-painted by the Author were shown each day. This American visitor was not a birdwatcher and could not tell me more. Perhaps some of your readers can.

2. I understand that in Kelantan in Malaysia, they have every June, a Bird singing competition. Early in the morning over a hundred birds compete in three one-hour rounds from cages hung on tall poles. Moving from pole to pole, judges listen to the songs of each bird which is required to emit three kinds of sound; Shrill and Piercing, Slightly Guttural, Deep and Resonant. Residents of, or visitors to Kelantan, can perhaps describe this competition."

Which Species?: Jasper Newsome who is now stationed at Almora writes to say "The most memorable bird for me here is a Babbler (Sp?), smaller, neater and less gregarious than common and jungle Babblers, but active, noisy and what I can only call slyly bold. It is a sort of olivaceous grey brown over most of its plumage, but has streaks of lighter, shiny grey on breast and head. The only real features are distinctly rusty ear coverts and rusty wings, particularly the primaries and coverts. It seems to be resident, territorial, and is quite garrulous with a variety of whistles, chirrups and chatters - one vigorous, descending chirruping call being part of its territorial display, accompanied by much putting up breast and drooping of wings. This bird is not included in Salim's common bird book, nor Flemings' Nepali book (Nor Salim's North Eastern Himalayan Book). Strange that my favourite bird here (it enters my huts even!) is an unknown. That is symptomatic of the state of my ornithology, and I still cannot send you a decent article on the birds here. One day!"

New Societies: It is encouraging to see the large number of birdwatching societies which are coming up in our country. The latest to come to my notice is Evergreen (An Organisation of Wildlife Enthusiasts). They have written to say they saw a Hill Myna within the grounds of the Theosophical Society Gardens at Adyar. Obviously it must have escaped from a cage.

Multiple Baya Nests: Newsletter No.4 of the Drongo Nature Club reports the siting of several Multiple Baya Nests. On enquiring from Salim Ali about this phenomenon, they received the following reply:

"I was glad to get your note on a recent birdwatching trip to Somnath. In almost every large colony of Baya nests there are one or two, or more, multiple nests-usually 2 or 3 storeyed, but sometimes upto 6 and rarely even upto 7. They apparently belong to different birds who have taken possession by ousting rivals. But only one nest is in use at one time, and the entrance of the previous is sealed by the newcomer before he commences to add his own nest to the complex. Of the two 'entrances' you mention, one is that originally provided by the owner himself while the hole on the side is usually bored by a predator (perhaps a crow) trying to reach the contents of the nest. It is sometimes made by a munia trying to utilise a disused Baya nest for laying its own eggs in."

Kingfishers take on home help: AC Soundararaj has sent an interesting clipping from the New Scientist of 17th July 1980 which is reproduced here.

"Many birds employ helpers at the nest site. These helpers may feed the young and help to drive off predators. In recent years researchers have asked themselves what makes a pair take on helpers; and do helpers get anything out of it? Dr. Heinz-Ulrich Ruyer of Seewiesen, West Germany, has come up with some interesting answers (Behavioural Ecology and Sociobiology, vol 6, p 219).

Ruyer studied two colonies of the Kenyan pied kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis rudis*), one at Lake Naivasha, the other at Lake Victoria. Like the British kingfisher, pied kingfishers feed almost exclusively on fish. To catch their prey they fly over the water, searching, sometimes hovering, and plunge when they see a fish. At Lake Victoria pied kingfishers feed mainly on fish of low energetic value. At Lake Naivasha energy-rich fish are more plentiful, and the kingfishers fare better. Similarly, the average amount of time taken to catch a fish is only 5.9 minutes at Lake Naivasha compared with 13 minutes at Lake Victoria. The picklings are not so good at Lake Victoria!

This difference leads to very different helper structures at the two colonies. Helpers may be of two sorts. Primary helpers are the yearling sons of at least one of the breeding pair being assisted. Secondary helpers are surplus males whose own attempts to pair that year have failed. They are unrelated to the pair being assisted.

At Lake Naivasha where food is plentiful only primary helpers are accepted. "Candidate" secondary helpers are driven off. At Lake Victoria both primary and secondary helpers are accepted. It looks as though secondary helpers are taken on only when the breeding pairs are desperate - when they need as many beaks as they can muster. If so, we'd expect the survival of young reared by parents alone to be greater at Lake Naivasha than at Lake Victoria. This is exactly what happens. More than twice as many survive at Lake Naivasha.

We might also expect that at Lake Victoria the more secondary helpers the greater the chances of survival of the young. In fact, with one helper the survival of chicks is 78 per cent. With two it is 100 per cent. Clearly, when food is scarce secondary helpers are useful to have around!

What do helpers get out of it then? By aiding his mother or father in raising his half brothers or sisters a primary helper increases his inclusive fitness. And the secondary helpers? By helping a female one year, a secondary helper may be allowed to pair with her in the following season. Thus by serving a female the secondary helper is really looking to the future.

Clearly to the male of the pair secondary helpers are potential competitors, so it is no surprise that the male frequently attacks candidate secondary helpers. The male's decision to take on a secondary helper must balance the risk of losing his mate next year against that of losing his young this year. At Lake Victoria the secondary helper's application is often reluctantly accepted!"

Birdwatching at Somnath (Prabhas-Patan) by Udayan Mehta

During the Diwali Vacation we visited Somnath, near Veraval on the Saurashtra coast. The six day trip starting on 6th November 80 was delightful. I had luck in the morning as my neighbour called me to show a beautiful bird sitting on a pillar. It happened to be the Brownheaded Storkbilled Kingfisher (*Polargopsis capensis*). A large multi coloured bird with a brown head greenish blue upper parts, underparts chocolate coloured, with a large heavy red bill. Travelling by the Somnath Mail we looked out of the window and saw large groups of Black Ibis between Jetalsar and Junagadh.

We reached Somnath on 7th November and our room overlooked the sea to the right of our room so the sacred temple of Lord Shiva which as is well known has a long history of destruction and renovation. A few illuminated ships could be seen against the background of the setting sun.

Next morning we walked on the beach and saw a number of Gullbilled Terns (*Gelochalidon nilotica*). We noticed that they did not dive inside the water like River Terns. They always picked up the prey from the surface of the sea. Some birds appeared to be Brownheaded Gulls.

In the evening again on the beach we saw quite a few Brownheaded Gulls (*Larus brunnicephalus*) where the river Hiran meets the sea. They were being harassed by Jungle Crows and as they flapped their wings to escape from the crows we could clearly observe their black primaries with the two mirrors near the tip of the wings.

With these gulls there were two Gullbilled Terns sitting some distance away and there was also a solitary reef heron completely slaty with a white patch on its throat, a long straight pointed yellow beak and yellow toes and webs.

After sunset there was a group of 8 to 10 birds which we identified as Spotted Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*). It was interesting to watch them eating small crabs. On the morning of 9th November we walked inside a small jungle country mostly of Babul trees (*Prosopis juliflora*) between the temple and the Triveni Sangam. We saw Black Drongos, Magpie Robins, a Whitebreasted Kingfisher. On the morning of the 10th we saw a few Grey Wagtails and White Wagtails. The White Wagtails was the race *Dukhunensis* with white ear coverts. At Triveni Sangam we saw 20 Grey Herons and also an Openbilled Stork. Later we also saw a Common Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*). We were surprised not to have seen any Blackheaded Gulls (*Larus ridibundus*). I remember having seen them in January 1979 in hundreds. On enquiry with the local fishermen we were told that these Gulls arrive in late December.

Birds - off Sukhna Lake by AK Chakravarthy, PS Sandhu, & PK Ananda Rao

On 2nd February 1980 there was a cold wave and a slight drizzle and we had little hope of seeing many birds in such inclement weather. All that we saw on Sukhna Lake were a flock of Coots and Sandpipers.

We decided to look for birds in a small patch of Acacia forests and we came across a hoopoe a lesser grey shrike (*Lanius minor*) a party of Scarlet Minivets, a Black Drongo, a Goldenbacked Woodpecker and a Chestnutheaded Nuthatch. It was interesting to see the Woodpecker searching for insects in the comparatively larger trees while the Nuthatch worked its way up and down the trunks of much smaller trees. On the dung-pads we saw Grey Wagtails looking for insects. A party of Grey Tits were feeding in typical fashion hanging upside down below the tender twigs of trees. We saw a male Bluethroat (*Erithacus svecicus*) come out of a lantana bush to pick up an insect.

As was to be expected we found that there were different species of birds in the four different environments we had observed. One was the forest floor the other the bare ends of Acacia trees, third the Acacia tree trunks and four the foliage of the acacia tree.

While returning home we found the two graceful Blackbellied Terns (*Sterna acuticauda*) on Sukhna Lake.

CorrespondenceBlackwinged Kite in Bandipur by Saumitra Banerjee

On 5th November 1980 we went to Bandipur and apart from coming across much enthralling fauna, we were fortunate to see a Blackwinged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) parachute down in its customary style on a marshy bit of land. Later it flew towards our vehicle and for a moment I thought there was going to be a collision. I was surprised to see that in the list of birds at the reception counter in Bandipur Sanctuary the name of the Blackwinged Kite has been omitted.

Mini Keoladev Ghana near Ahmedabad by UM Rawal

Members of the Drongo Nature Club visited this Sanctuary on the 22nd of November. Because of the poor rainfall this year the reservoir was utilised for irrigation and the level of the water was very low. Nevertheless we were able to see 21 species of birds including Spoonbills, Flamingoes, Rosy Pelican, Grey Pelican, Whitenecked Stork, as well as White Storks.

Nests of Lapwings by Aashesh Pittie

This is with reference to the article by Shri. Prakash Gole and Shri. Taej Mundkur, on the 15th page of the No.6/7 issue of the Newsletter. I too have seen a nest of the lapwing (whether red or yellow-wattled was not confirmed) with Shri B.C. Choudhury - a keen birder - which was like the one they saw. This nest was on the ground in the Lion Safari Park of the Nehru Zoological Park of Hyderabad. It was round with a diameter of approx. 8 inches. The eggs were laid on a platform was extremely neat and flat and almost geometrically round. The four dirty brown eggs with haphazard black blotches all over were arranged in such a way that the tapering end lay in the center (as also observed by Shri. V. Santharam in the same Newsletter).

This nest had most probably been abandoned because there were no birds around. This nest also was built near a water source - the Miralam tank - very close to the nest.

Birds Near Narora by Asad Rafi Rahmani

I read with interest your editorial in the latest issue of the Newsletter. Regarding 'Checklists for tourists' (p.3), I have following to say:

"There is a huge reservoir in the Ganga river near Narora in Bulandshahr district of U.P. (India's fourth atomic power plant is being built nearby). During winter, hundreds of migratory birds visit this reservoir and stay uptill April or May. I have seen almost all the riverine ducks and waders of North India.

In the evening again on the beach we saw quite a few Brownheaded Gulls (*Larus brunnicephalus*) where the river Hiran meets the sea. They were being harassed by Jungle Crows and as they flapped their wings to escape from the crows we could clearly observe their black primaries with the two mirrors near the tip of the wings.

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A big colony for engineers and workers of the power plant is being built nearby, so there is every likelihood of the destruction of the natural habitat in future. I have taken up the matter with the UP Tourism Department and the Forest Department and both agree that the Narora reservoir is a good place for a bird sanctuary or a refuge.

Chestnutheaded Bee-eaters and others in Madras by V Santharam

Regarding Chestnutheaded Bee-eaters, I am sorry that at present I am not in a position to provide you with any information as we have not come across any in Madras. Madras has only two species of bee-eaters - the small green bee-eater (resident) and the blue-tailed bee-eater which is seen in Madras during winter. Incidentally the chestnutheaded bee-eater recorded in 'Madras' was actually collected in Shevaroye and this specimen is being exhibited in the Madras museum.

As regards the Grey Plover sighted in Dodda Gubbi on 1st September by yourself and Mr. P.T. Thomas, I referred to Vol. 2, Handbook of Indian Birds and according to the distribution it is said that the bird is "less common in inland waters - erratically or as a straggler - mostly on migration passage in autumn and spring. Recorded thus in Kashmir, UP, Bihar, Nepal, Assam, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Deccan. Doubtless also occurs inland elsewhere". Perhaps the bird you encountered was one such straggler.

While on the subject of migration may I be permitted to say some few words about bird migration in Adyar Estuary? As usual the common sandpiper was the first to arrive on 18th July and by the end of the month they were quite common here. On the same date a greenshank was seen in flight. Blackwinged stilts (over 100 birds) were seen on the 10th and on the same date a large sand plover, 1 whimbrel (in flight) and a redshank were seen. Swallows were seen occasionally from the 1st week of August, though they appeared to be common only by the last week of the same month. There were a pair of curlew sandpipers, one of them in breeding (reddish) plumage on 16th August along with 4-5 lesser sand plover and a littleringed plover.

On 1st September I was able to spot a Grey Plover (what a coincidence!) some little stints, over 25 bartailed godwits and 3-4 turnstones. On 4th, I spotted a few golden plovers in worn-out breeding plumage. On 6th I was able to observe 2-3 Terek or Avocet Sandpipers landing on an islet. On 13th September I was in for a surprise. Apart from a newly arrived Blacktailed Godwit which I saw side-by-side with the bartailed (the latter being seen for the first time in Adyar, this year) I was pleasantly shocked to find nearly 16-17 teals. On a later visit on 15th, (when I saw over 50 numbers) I confirmed them to be Garganey Teals. As the mouth of the river was closed by the sand bar, the water level was very high, submerging most of the islets and to the birds it might have looked like a lake and hence their presence there! Of course last year I used to see teals in flight here but never in the water. I am sure this is an unusual record.

Baya Nests in October by D. Sidhartha

According to the Hand Book the breeding season of Baya Weaver Birds is from May - September. But in the month of October (1980) I had seen at least three colonies of Baya Weaver Birds. The male birds were constructing their nests. I had also seen a few female birds. Because the male birds were in their breeding plumage. These three colonies were seen in a field, where grass was being grown to be used as fodder.

Then in the month of November (1980) I was surprised to notice that all the nests had been abandoned by the Baya birds. Most of the nests were partially built, till the chamber. At the same time the grass in most areas of the field had been harvested. Does the breeding season correspond with the commencement of S.W. monsoon or in the presence of nesting material? What if both the factors are absent?

Trapping of Partridges by D Sidhartha

I had gone out to watch birds at nearby fields on 3-11-80. By chance I met a bird catcher. This person had two wire cages with him. Each of the cages contained a male painted partridge. According to him, the birds were male ones. In fact this bird catcher had trained these birds to make sounds, on whistling. He also had a trap with him. A large rectangular box divided into a number of compartments. These compartments were lined with nylon wires, in order to trap a bird. The males on making sounds, lure the females which get entangled in the trap.

Need for a List of Tree Species by BA Palkhiwala

In the Newsletter for Birdwatchers (September 80), on page 3 under "Bird check lists for tourists", there is a suggestion for lists of resident and migrant birds in some of our cities. This is a welcome suggestion and Bombay Natural History Society is the right authority.

I would add my own suggestions that there should be also a list of local trees with their locations, like the one brought out by the tourist department many years ago, of which I have an old copy. Of course, that list is out-dated as many more new areas have come up in Bombay with beautiful flowering trees like Pangara, Peltophorum, Cassias and others. Yesterday, during my leisurely walk in the Churchgate Reclamation area I counted about 400 trees including a good number of the above and also Bhandi, Casuarina, Coconut, Scarlet Cordia, Bottle Brush, Pipal, Banyan, Gulmohur, Asupala and Rain trees.

I am sure a lot of our common resident birds like Bulbuls, Coppersmith, Tailor Bird, Sunbirds, Mynas, Parakeets, Sparrows, and Crows must be roosting and enjoying the fruits of some of these trees. You will, therefore, agree that birds and trees go together and if a list of birds of the cities is brought out, there should also be one for the trees.

Mistaken Identity by RP Heran

We read with interest P.T. Thomas's letter in the Newsletter in Vol. XX No.12, concerning the presence of Chestnutheaded Bee-eaters in the CMC Campus, Vellore. We have been observing birds in this Campus for the past 3 years and have not yet made a positive identification of this particular bird, including Jan-March, 1980.

In that part of the Campus which Mr. Thomas describes, the Bluetailed Bee-eaters are found in larger numbers than the Small Green Bee-eaters, roughly in the ratio 3:1. The presence of the Central elongated tail feathers into blunt pins has always been to us, a reliable guide to the identity of the Small Green Bee-eater, in contrast to the Chestnutheaded Bee-eater whose central pin feathers project only slightly beyond the tail, as described in the book of Indian Birds by Salim Ali, 11th Edition.

All the bee-eaters seen here unfailingly correspond to the above mentioned feature in addition to size and the black necklace. With due respect to Mr. Thomas, we think that this is a case of mistaken identity.

Birds Flying in Darkness by Margaret P Walkey

On receiving the December Newsletter, I was very interested to read Mr. V. Santharam's article quoting extracts from Clive Catchpole's book concerning certain birds flying in darkness and also having the ability to locate their individual nests. I was disappointed when no one else followed on, to shed light on these two areas of bird life, and am all the more grateful to Mr. Santharam for having done so now, two full years later! I found what he wrote most interesting.

Studies of the Common Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*)

AP Gupte writes "The Common Cuckoo breeds in the Hoshangabad district of Madhya Pradesh. It parasitizes the nests of Rufousbacked Shrikes. I have observed this in the eastern and central parts of the district. I have had no opportunity to observe it in the western part.

Two notes on the breeding of the Common Cuckoo in Hoshangabad district have appeared in the Newsletter for Birdwatchers of December, 1978 and September, 1980. In the latter, Mr. Zafar Futehally has quoted a passage from the Handbook, Vol.3, page 206, which contains the following sentence: "The whole subject calls for a more methodical de novo re-investigation."

I am willing to take up an investigation in the Hoshangabad area, but I feel that a thorough investigation can only be carried out by a team of persons equipped suitably.

(The Editor would appreciate if people willing to co-operate on this project correspond with Mr. AP Gupte, Friends Rural Centre, Rasulia, Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh 461001.

Slaty-headed Scimitar-Babbler should be Pomatorhinus horsfieldi, not P. schisticeps. These, however, are minor points and should not detract from the value of the book. At £4.95 it is not exactly a bargain but a less expensive soft-back version is available.

D.P. Wijesinghe

Our Contributors

- Mr. Udayan Mehta, 8-A, Jeevan Smruti Society, Mirambica Road, Naranpura, Ahmedabad 380 013.
 Mr. AK Chakravarthy, H-7 R.No.122, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab.
 Mr. PS Sandhu, c/o. Mr. AK Chakravarthy.
 Mr. PK Ananda Rao, c/o. Mr. AK Chakravarthy.
 Mr. S. Banerjee, 91, Surat Bafe Road, Calcutta 700 026.
 Mr. UM Rawal, Department of Zoology, School of Sciences, Gujarat University, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380 009.
 Mr. Aasheesh Pittie, 14-7-370, Begum Bazar, Hyderabad 500 012.
 Mr. Asad Rafi Rahmani, Research Biologist, Avifauna Project, Kodikkarai 614807, Tamil Nadu.
 Mr. D. Sidhartha, 34/A, Santosh Nagar Colony, Hyderabad 659.
 Mrs. Margaret P Walkey, Bethesda Leprosy Hospital, Narsapur, W. Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh.
 Mr. V. Santharam, c/o. Shri. NV Bhat, 12-A, Leith Castle South Street, Madras 600 028.
 Mr. BA Palkhiwalla, 785A, M. Joshi Colony, Dadar, Bombay 400 014.
 Mr. RP Haran, CMC, Vellore.
 Mr. AC Karat, CMC, Vellore.
 Mr. John P Selvan, CMC, Vellore.
 Mr. AP Gupte, Friends Rural Centre, Rasulia, Hoshangabad, Madhya Pradesh, 461001.
 Mr. DB Wijesinghe, 16, Charlotte Road, Wellington, Surrey, BH6 9AX, England.

Unidentified Subscribers

Subscriptions have started to come in for which the Editor is grateful but so far only a 100 have been received. Will the others kindly oblige soon.

Incidentally three money orders were received during December without the name or address mentioned on the tear slip. In consequence we are unable to determine from whom the money was received. Will those subscribers whose payments have not been acknowledged in this issue kindly inform the editor about their remittances? We would also request that the name and address is always mentioned on the tear-off slips of the Money Order Forms.

EDITOR

Subscription for the year 1981 have been received from:

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Errata: The note on Rosy Pastors by Indra Kumar Sharma in the October issue of the Newsletter referred to Jodhpur. Unfortunately Jodhpur was misprinted as Jaipur and the error is regretted.

EDITOR



Editor: Zafar Futehally

Dodda Gubbi Post, Via Vidyanagar, Bangalore - 562134

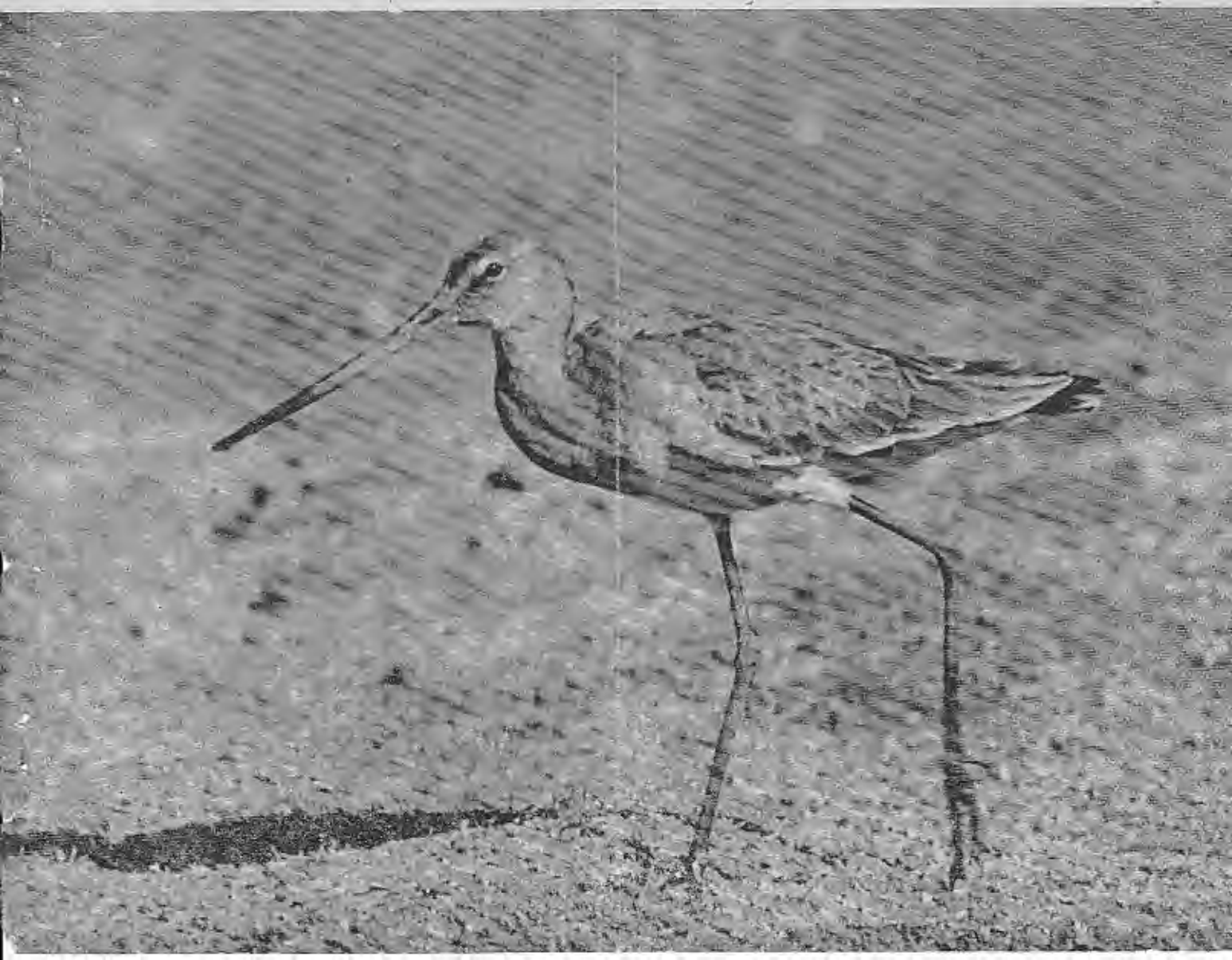
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Cover Picture: Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Photo by: E. Hanumantha Rao

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXI NO. 2 FEBRUARY 1981



NEWSLETTER
FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Vol.XXI No.2

February 1981

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Editorial

Peregrine Falcon: The London Times of September 3rd'1980 reported on the "Highly organized rings of thieves who raided 42 eyries between April and July". Apparently Peregrine Falcons are stolen either as eggs or as young eyases and fetch as much as 1500 pounds each on the black market. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has been pressing for legislation to protect Britain's birds of prey. It suggests that "The enforcement agency composed of a few expert officers with access to licence applications and criminal records should be formed under the auspices of the police, the Department of the Environment and the Nature Conservancy Council".

We in India have been urging for a long time that the inadequate police force (so engaged these days in dealing with antisocial activities) cannot possibly be expected to enforce the provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and other Acts for the protection of birds and other species. It is to be hoped that the recently formed Department of the Environment will take the initiative in organising volunteer forces for protecting the natural environment.

The White-tailed Sea Eagle: The London Times also reports that the White-tailed Sea Eagle which the Nature Conservancy Council has been reintroducing into Scotland during the past 5 years seems to have settled in well and "hopes are high that current signs of courtship will lead to the first attempts at breeding in the next year or two".

In the 19th century this bird "*Haliaeetus albicilla*" was persecuted into extinction because it was believed to be preying on sheep. Recent studies of this bird reveal that they feed largely on carrion consisting of red deer, feral goats as well as on sea-birds and sometimes on crows and ravens. They also catch fish. This particular species albicilla is not found in India, though we have two species of this genera in the white-bellied sea eagle, and Pallas's fishing eagle.

Bird Foundation: A Bird Foundation "in the cause of our feathered friends" has been established at No.2, 18th Cross, Malleswaram, Bangalore 560 055. One of the objectives of the Foundation is to provide nest boxes for different species of birds. Initially attempts will be made to find nesting places for the Magpie Robin, Spotted Owlet, Myna, Grey Tit and Indian Roller. It is hoped that once the boxes are established it will enable birdwatchers to observe and record the activities of the inhabitants.

The Bird Foundation hopes that the Karnataka Electricity Board will give

permission to use the high structures of the steel pylons for fitting these nest boxes. In such locations it should be possible to induce birds of prey to nest. Members of our Newsletter should help the Bird Foundation by keeping in touch with them and offering to participate in the nest box programme.

Rare Birds Killed to Protect Poultry: Acharya Dwarakanath has sent us a page from the November 17, 1980 of Time magazine which makes sad reading. The US has a 9 billion dollar poultry industry, and from time to time this is attacked by the so called Newcastle disease, a viral disorder that attacks chicken as well as a wide variety of other birds. To prevent the disease from spreading in the poultry industry "rare birds are being killed by the thousands by passing them in plastic bags with Carbon dioxide". Government officials suspect that the disease was introduced by the rare tropical birds that are smuggled into the USA and sold to eager buyers at fancy prices: up to 1300 dollars for a Moluccan Cockatoo, or 8000 dollars for a hyacinthine macaw.

Predators and Prey: It is well known that the prey species in a jungle do not always panic, as one would expect them to, when a predator is in the vicinity. Chital and Sambar graze unconcernedly while a pack of wild dogs reclines in the distance. Obviously the deer know when the dogs are intent on attacking them, and when they are well fed and not in the mood to pursue their prey. In the case of birds one is often surprised at the way that helpless passerines perch in near proximity to their killers.

Indra Kumar Sharma has sent in a note which deals with this situation. He writes that he has often seen house sparrows, Indian ring doves and little brown doves, flying close to, or even perching close to a bird of prey such as the blackwinged kite, a short-toed eagle, a kestrel or a laggar falcon. He thinks that this happens because the predatory bird cannot attack from the position, relative to the prey. The prey species seem to know very well that they are safe under the circumstances.

A Morning's Worth of Birdwatching by Lavkumar Khacher

On Sunday 11th January a few of us went for the day to Jasdan, my home place. A short distance up the river from the town is one of the oldest reservoirs in Saurashtra below which is an attractive shaded farm belonging to my cousin. A part of this property has a stretch of what is euphemistically called waste land, all pitted during the time the earth was dug up for the dam. These pits are filled with water seeping from one of the irrigation canals. The wasteland is a veritable paradise for birds. It was here that years ago I saw my first Pitta. Its descendant stills arrives regularly prior to the onset of the rains.

What had been a tangled jungle has been gently landscaped by a very good friend who lives almost a hermits life here in a two room house. He has surrounded himself by shade loving plants with bright chrysanthemums and variegated bougainvilleas in the few sunny patches. It is an idyllic retreat.

11th morning was one of those Saurashtrian winter mornings when a boisterous wind make everything dance. The wind, the brilliant sun, and the cool morning make such days delightful once one gets out of the house. Even the birds were very active.

The most spectacular displays were by some of the raptors. Usually, on a coldchilly morning they are rather sluggish, the absence of air currents to provide lift makes them loth to ~~take~~ wing until fairly late when the first updrafts start rising. Even then, they, graceful it is true, tend to soar lazily. On a windy morning they come into their element and what spectacular demonstration of aeronautics they provide!

On this particular morning we watched a Himalayan Black Kite - subspecies of our Pariah Kite, a Booted Eagle, a Longlegged Buzzard and a Kestrel. Both the Booted Eagle and the Kite were soaring against the wind, the former above at over 500 ft. Suddenly, we watched it through our glasses, it closed its wings and plummeted head down onto the kite below it. It made us all gasp in admiration. Then followed a few minutes of dog fighting. The kite was, however, well able to evade the attacks of its rival and the eagle soon decided to give up its belligerency. As the kite came low over, almost stationary against the brisk gale, we were able to appreciate why it is called a kite. Also, we could clearly see the white bases of the primaries which are good field identification marks.

Hardly had the Eagle and Kite combat ceased when a male Kestrel who had been sitting sheltered from the wind came on to entertain us. For minutes on end it stayed stationary against the wind and that too without even beating its wings! From time to time it would make sudden stoops on some prey unseen to us and after each stoop would use the momentum to rise still higher. Suddenly, it dropped, swept low along the dam and over it to swiftly slant down onto a flock of feeding Ashycrowned Finch Larks. The hapless lark just made it to safety. It was a near miss.

Over the lake were Lesser Terns, Whiskered Terns, a Black Ibis and a large flock of Little Cormorants - the cormorants did not appreciate the wind shipped surface for fishing in and sat gloomily on an island, but the terns were all action. Both common and demoiselle cranes started flighting in as we retraced our steps to the lunch area.

It is surprising how very many bird enthusiasts tend not to hear birds, unless, that is, they are really noisy or repetitions. Among the trees were green - or were they the greenish - leaf warblers, white-eyes, Tickel's Blue Flycatchers, Greyheaded Flycatchers, a Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher, several very smart Black Redstart males hopping around manure heaps, elegant Green Bee-eaters and the ubiquitous Redvented Bulbul.

A stroll along the nearby riverbed gave us a pair of Pied Kingfisher admirably seated close to each other to make comparison between the male and the female, among the reeds were several Plain Longtailed Warblers and a bittern presumed to be a Chestnut Bittern. The Whitebreasted Waterhens and the Moorhens which favour the flooded pits kept well hidden among the reeds and we did not see them.

On dry cliffs bounding the river we saw a couple of Striolated Buntings, several Tawny Pipits, flocks of Ashycrowned Finch Larks and several very confiding Rufoustailed Finch Larks. The nearness, the magnification through glasses revealed the thick finch-like bills which give both these larks their double names.

Later in the afternoon we watched a tractor ploughing in a nearby farm. A large flock of Bank Mynas and Black Drongos were in lively attendance. It was a fascinating sight. Then there were Rosy Pastors, Common Mynas, Roseringed Parakeets, House Sparrows, House Crows, Blue Rock Pigeons, Little Brown and Ringed Doves. Overhead were Common Swallows, Redrumped Swallows, Sand Martins, and House Swifts among others which I failed to register. The very pleasant day was terminated by two whitebellied Drongos flying in to wish us a farewell. Had I made a greater effort I would have seen many more species but I did not attempt to go after them and instead just let them come to me. It was a very leisurely and most enjoyable bit of birding I have done. Actually, I heard more than I saw.

Birdwatching from Jodhpur to Cape Comorin by Indra Kumar Sharma

In October 1980 I travelled from Jodhpur to Cape Comorin and during my travels, and while staying in various towns and cities I looked closely at the birdlife to see the distribution of the various species in the different parts of our country. I tried to relate the species to the environment.

I made notes about the avi-fauna present in different environments, for example in scrub jungle the Ring Dove, Little Brown Dove, and some species of Larks were abundant in Rajasthan and Gujarat, fairly common in Maharashtra, but very scarce further south. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, as well as in Madhya Pradesh, Doves, Redvented Bulbuls, White-cheeked Bulbuls, Grey Shrikes, and Common Babblers were abundant, but in the south in the same kind of country they were hardly observed.

In agricultural fields, everywhere, while cultivation was in progress, there were plenty of Black Drongos, Common Green Bee-eaters, Pond Herons, Little Egrets, and Indian Rollers. The Chestnut Bittern was observed in some parts of Kerala. The Common Myna was observed throughout my journey in agricultural fields often in association with cattle.

In the towns in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Bombay, the Blue Rock Pigeon, the House Sparrow and the Roseringed Parakeet were commonly seen, but were

not in evidence in Madras, Trivandrum and other south Indian cities. On enquiring about this in Madras I was told that pigeons, sparrows, and parakeets are common around Marwari localities where people feed them, and later I was able to confirm this statement. It shows that some birds are wholly dependent on man for food and reside in places where humans look after their interest. I find that in south Indian cities the Pariah Kite, the House Crow and the Jungle Crow were much more common than in north Indian cities. Along the sea shores and villages the Brahminy Kites were often seen, and they apparently have plenty of food in the way of offal and other items in the streets and in the bazars.

In any small pond in North India the Blackwinged Stilt, Spotted Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Little Stint, Redwattled Lapwing and Little Egret are common, but in south India I could only see the Little Egret and occasionally the Common Kingfisher. In ponds near villages there were often large numbers of domestic duck in the south and these duck are never observed in north India.

It is obvious that the human factor plays a vital role in the occurrence of birds in different areas. In Rajasthan and Gujarat the local population rigidly protects birds and also feeds them. Consequently the House Sparrow, the Blue Rock Pigeon, Parakeets and Peafowl are plentiful. These species are often absent in south India because the humans do not look on them with a friendly eye. As I indicated earlier species like the pigeon and the sparrows in Madras abound only around Marwari localities.

I would like to know from my south Indian birdwatching friends whether what I have said is correct, or whether I was mistaken, as I may well be, because of limited observation during a brief tour.

Birds in the Rain by Ananta Mitra

From the evening of 26th September 1978 till the morning of 30th September 1978 Calcutta and its suburbs received a record amount of rain. In 24 hours there was 37 cm. of rainfall and the sky remained overcast throughout, sometimes with long spells of rain accompanied with thunder.

My house in Tollygunge, a southern suburb of the city, overlooks a large mosque surrounded by a semi-wild garden of 2 acres. In the vicinity there is a dried-up pond which collects water during the rains. This garden contains about 30 species of birds and during these days of heavy rain I tried to find out how the birds reacted to the unusual weather. For this investigation I divided the spells of rain into four periods A, B, C and D, according to whether the showers were heavy, moderate, light or non-existent.

As I had expected no bird was visible during a heavy shower and birdlife in the garden seemed to be almost extinct. During the period of moderate rain, house sparrows and house crows were seen and the other birds in evidence were Rock Pigeon, Brown Shrikes, Common Myna, Redvented Bulbul, and Tailor Birds. The period of light drizzling, when rain occasionally ceased, was the most productive of all. After the heavy incessant rains a large number of birds emerged from confinement. I saw House Crows, Spotted Dove, Brown Shrikes, Redvented Bulbul, House Swifts, Pied Myna, House Sparrows, a female Koel, a Tree Pie, Roseringed Parakeet, Common Mynas, Tailor Birds, Pariah Kite, Cattle Egrets and a Goldenbacked Woodpecker.

Birding in and Around Hyderabad City by S Ashok Kumar

Birding in and Around Hyderabad City by S Ashok Kumar

The A.P. Birdwatchers Club members went birding in Banjara Hills area on 26-10-1980. Capt. NS Tyabji, Hony. Representative, WWF-India and Mr. Pushpa Kumar, Conservator of Forests, Wild Life, captained the team. The group headed eastwards towards a tiny valley. While negotiating the gentle incline of the mound overlooking the valley, we saw a pair of Blue Rock Thrush perched upright on a boulder. It was unmistakable that the blue one was a male and the grey-brown, a female. On a nearby boulder were a pair of Indian Robins silhouetted against the grey sky. Darting across our path we saw a flash of green - the Common Bee-eater with outstretched wings and Pintail. While advancing forward, our attention was drawn to a distant twit-twit call which was undoubtedly that of the Lapwing.

The group continued its trek and found a Black Redstart, obviously a male flitting from one boulder to another. The constant shivering of tail makes its identification easy. While climbing down the valley-side, a pair of Rufoustailed Finch Larks sallied forth, and perched on a shrub across the valley were a pair of Black Drongos. Over the crest of the hill hovered a Kestrel in mid air appearing momentarily stationary. Reaching the base of the valley, we skirted along its side and sighted a singing Bush Lark, the small Indian Sky Lark, Indian Wren Warbler and the Ashy Wren Warbler. The valley terminated in a marshy tank strangely devoid of water birds.

On 9-11-1980 the team visited Palmakole, 15 miles from Hyderabad. We made our way through the fields to the village tank where the following birds were identified, and as will be seen belonged to 21 Families.

Families

Laniidae: Brown Shrike

Motacillidae: Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit, Yellow Wagtail

Dicruridae: Black Drongo

Muscicapidae: Fantail Warbler, Indian Wren-Warbler, Blyth's Reed Warbler

Charadriidae: Spotted Sandpiper, Little Stint, Little Ringed Plover,
Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper

Alaudidae: Ashycrowned Finch-Lark, * Sykes's Crested Lark, Redwinged Bush Lark

Ardeidae: Purple Heron, Pond Heron, Little Egret, Smaller Egret, Grey Heron, Snake-bird

Accipitridae: Pale Harrier, Marsh Harrier*, Pariah Kite

*Female

Plocidae: Whitethroated Munia

Recurvirostridae: Blackwinged Stilt

Hirundinidae: Wiretailed Swallow, Common Swallow

Rallidae: Whitebreasted Waterhen, Coot

Burhinidae: Great Stone Plover

Anatidae: Bluewinged Teal, Common Pochard, Tufted Pochard, Spotbill

Laridae: Whiskered Tern

Corvidae: House Crow,

Sturnidae: Common Myna

Meropidae: Green Bee-eater, Bluetailed Bee-eater

Coraciidae: Indian Roller

Pycnonotidae: Redvented Bulbul

Podicipedidae: Dabchick

At the invitation of ICRISAT (International Crop Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics), the team went birding in ICRISAT campus on 20-11-80. Consisting of a few hundred acres, the Campus provides a good habitat for birds because of its several lakes and varied vegetation. The following (26) varieties of birds were recorded, including a pair of Black Ibis with their spectacular crimson crowns . A lone Marsh Harrier was an unforgettable sight.

Families

Anatidae: Brahminy Duck, Spotbill Duck, Pintail

Rallidae: Indian Moorhen

Accipitridae: Marsh Harrier, Little Egret

Alcedinidae: Whitebreasted Kingfisher

Muscicapidae: Blyth's Reed Warbler, Pied Bush Chat, Indian Wren Warbler

Charadriidae: Common Sandpiper, Redwattled Lapwing, Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Greenshank, Plover (Sp.?), Little Ringed Plover, Redshank, Little Stint

Sturnidae: Common Myna

Pycnonotidae: Redvented Bulbul

Threskiornithidae: Black Ibis (2)

Ardeidae: Grey Heron, Pond Heron

Recurvirostridae: Blackwinged Stilt

Falconidae: Kestrel

Apodidae: Palm Swift

Phalacrocoracidae: Little Cormorant (2)

On 5-12-1980 we visited Chilkur village located between the two great lakes of Hyderabad city Himayatsagar and Osmansagar. It was sunny and warm when we entered the enclosed forest reserve of a few hundred acres. The area is chiefly dry thorn-scrub country with boulders. Most of the birds identified are open country birds. It was fascinating to watch a pair of Harriers and a Blackwinged Kite completely dominating the sky above.

Families

Motacillidae: Tawny Pipit
Charadriidae: Yellow-wattled Lapwing, Wood Sandpiper, Little Stint
Campophaeidae: Blackheaded Cuckoo-Shrike
Anatidae: Pintail, Wigeon, Tufted Pochard
Psittacidae: Blossomheaded Parakeet
Accipitridae: Pale Harrier, Blackwinged Kite
Hirundinidae: Wiretailed Swallow
Muscicapidae: Indian Robin, Pied Bush Chat
Pycnonotidae: Redvented Bulbul
Columbidae: Little Brown Dove
Recurvirostridae: Blackwinged Stilt
Laniidae: Rufousbacked Shrike, Grey Shrike
Sturnidae: Brahminy Myna
Alaudidae: Bush Lark, Rufoustailed Finch Lark, Crested Lark
Dicruridae: Black Drongo
Coraciidae: Indian Roller
Ardeidae: Pond Heron, Little Egret
Meropidae: Common Green Bee-eater
 1 - 100 P.P.

Correspondence

Comments on the Newsletter

I find the lovely Chestnutheaded Bee-eater much in the news. I may point out that the Green Bee-eater often shows a very coppery glint on the head seen at certain angles, and can be confused for the current favourite. The latter lacks the elongated central tail pins, but these can be broken or frayed in the Green Bee-eater. So before shouting Chestnutheaded, do please circle the bird/s under observation. In our part of the country we might be very lucky to get another species to confuse us - the European Bee-eater. This also has a chestnutish head. Both this and the Chestnutheaded have yellow throats contra green or blue of the Green Bee-eater. The European Bee-eater is a rather rare winter migrant or autumnal passage migrant to N.W. India - Gujarat birdwatchers do keep a look out. The Blue-cheeked Bee-eater is another bird to be found in the NW and the very similar Blue-tailed Bee-eater in other parts of the country. Both are considerably larger than the Green Bee-eater. They both lack the chestnut or the coppery shine on the head which is green. So much for the Chestnutheaded Bee-eater - a lovely bird indeed which I hope turns up in my garden but which if it does, I'd think twice before shouting - it could be the European and even then

I'd like to have a friend around to be a witness, and I'd always say "probably" before mentioning the species as that great ornithologist of my college days, Horace Alexander taught me by precept.

In the January 1981 Newsletter on page 5 we have Sandhu and Rao talking of the Lesser Grey Shrike - I quickly looked up the Synopsis by D. Ripley and quote:

? *Lanius minor* Gmelin
Lesser Grey Shrike

Breeds in south and central Europe, Asia Minor, East to Turkestan, wintering in Southern Africa

937 ? *Lanius minor*

Range - said to have been obtained in Baluchistan, at Quetta (Cumming) and Chaman (Cumming 1880); specimen not known to be in existence.

So, the bird probably was the Grey Shrike (*Lanius excubitor*). Judging from available illustrations, it is rather difficult to tell the two species apart in the field apart from the size difference - if they are together - and the black forehead in the Lesser Grey Shrike.

Referring again to this note, it is always a touch and go between the Scarlet Minivet and the Longtailed Minivet. In the north Indian plains the chances are that the birds most commonly seen are probably the latter. This brings me to the Chestnutheaded Nuthatch, surely this is the Chestnutbellied Nuthatch.

In the same issue on page 4 Udayan Mehta mentions seeing a Brownheaded Storkbilled Kingfisher (*Palaeoriparis capensis*). The synopsis gives Surat Dangs as the nearest to Saureshra. However, we have had the Blackcapped Kingfisher near Rajkot when the Surat Dangs were its recorded limits on the west coast, so there are all chances of the storkbilled turning up at Vereval, but all such records need to be carefully substantiated and records sent to the Bombay Natural History Society for its journal.

Let me hasten to conclude - I am not questioning anyones bonafides, but merely stating the need to be very careful in claiming unusual bird sightings - where the chances of being mistaken are great.

Lavkumar Khacher

Birds of Sukhna Lake

I was very interested to learn from the Note on this subject in the January, 1981 issue of the Newsletter, by Messrs Chakravarthy, Sandhu and Rao that they had seen a Lesser Grey Shrike (*Lanius minor*).

I wonder if they are absolutely certain of their identification? My suspicions were aroused as soon as I read of the sighting.

On checking, I find that Ripley in the 'Synopsis of the Birds of India and Pakistan', Page 279, places a question mark against the species, and makes it clear that he does not believe it has ever occurred in India or Pakistan.

Salim Ali in the 'Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan', Vol.5, Page 83, queries the status of the bird, but states that it had been obtained on passage (?) near Quetta in May and at Chaman in April. These records, I believe, relate to about 1880. He goes on to say that it may occur in the N.W. frontier districts of West Pakistan.

Both authors make it clear that there is no specimen from India or Pakistan extant.

It will be appreciated, therefore, that if this record could be substantiated, it would be one of great importance, and should be fully reported and published in the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society.

SK Reeves

Which Bird? - Query by Jasper Newsome

Jasper Newsome's "Which species?" (p.2, Newsletter, Jan.81) is the Streaked Laughing Thrush (Garrulax lineatus), illustrated on

Plate 75 opposite p.48, Handbook Vol.7

Plate 22 " p.112, E. Himalayas

Plate 15 " p.36, Hill Birds

Salim Ali

Russian Ducks Cross Over

The Hind Jammu: Jan.16.

I reproduce below a news item which appeared in The Hindu dated 17-1-1981.

Russian ducks, estimated to number about six lakhs, have crossed over to Kashmir Valley from the colder regions of Siberia during the last two months, according to a spokesman of the Jammu and Kashmir Government's Game Preservation Department here.

About 100 species of birds have so far been reported in Jammu and Kashmir - Our Correspondent.

JE David,
Data Centre, WWF-India

Birds Smuggling

Bird smuggling is now more lucrative than drug smuggling - a parrot fetching twenty dollars at the Mexican border would sell for seven hundred dollars in Houston....Sales of cockatoos, African grays and other tropical birds are the fastest growing part of the US pet industry.... A store called "Parrot Jungle" which displays birds on open perches started two years ago in New York area - it now has three stores.....Fifty thousand parrots with a street value of ten million dollars were smuggled into Texas in 1979.

Arun Bhatia

Blue Rock Pigeons and Longlegged Buzzard

Date:16-12-1980; Time:15.05 hours: I was sitting in my porch, when my attention was drawn by a flock of about 25 Blue Rock Pigeons circling around a soaring Longlegged Buzzard, whose identity was apparent by its size slightly smaller than a Pariah Kite, rounded rufous tail, black tipped wings and a brownish black carpal patch. Blue rock pigeons were obviously bullying it but the Buzzard did not seem to be annoyed by them, and only now and then tried to go away by diving a few feet and suddenly changing its direction. This went on for about ten minutes, till a Pariah Kite came close to the scene and the Blue Rock Pigeons changed their direction to go away. After this, the Buzzard soared away leisurely looking downwards and moving its head from side to side, obviously looking for prey on the ground.

Time 15.35 hours: the same buzzard was soaring high in the sky and two Pariah Kites were now and then attacking it. The buzzard didn't pay much attention to them except for changing its direction suddenly, when the kites came very close to it. This went on for about four minutes, after which the Kites went away.

Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma

Our Contributors

- Mr. Lavkumar Khacher, 14, Jayant Society, Rajkot 360 004, Gujarat.
 Mr. Indra Kumar Sharma, Bhagwati Bhavan, Ratanada Road, Jodhpur 342020.
 Mr. Ananta Mitra, 6/1, PA Shah Road, Calcutta 700 033.
 Mr. Ashok Kumar S, IAS, House No.10-3-283/5, Humayun Nagar, Hyderabad 500 028.
 Mr. SK Reeves, 6, Town Close, Holt, Norfolk, England.
 Dr. Salim Ali, 46, Pali Hill, Bandra, Bombay 400 050.
 Mr. JE David, Data Centre for Natural Resources, c/o. Dynacraft Machine Co. Ltd., 1st Floor, No.36, VII Cross, Vasanthnagar, Bangalore 560 052.
 Mr. Arun Bhatia, 81 Mont Blanc, Nepean Sea Road, Bombay 400 006.
 Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma, 54, Avinash Path, Dhuleshwar Garden, Jaipur 302001.

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Abroad: Mr. SK Reeves, 6, Town Close, Holt, Norfolk, England, 5 Pounds; Mrs. GNS Robertson, "Martindale", Easton Royal, Pewsey, Wiltshire, England, 3 pounds; Mr. Ashok Kumar, Al-Futtaim Tower Scaffolding, P.O.Box 5502, Dubai, UAE, Rs.100/-; Miss Ann Talbot Smith, 1302, Killiney Apts., 147, Killiney Road, Singapore 90923, 5 pounds.

ರೈತನ ಸೆಮ್ಮದಿ — ನಾಡಿಗೆ ಸೆಮ್ಮದಿ

ಕಡಗದಲ್ಲಿದ್ದ ರೈತನ ಸೆಮ್ಮದಿಯಾದ ಎಲಿಗೆಯ ಕಡೆಗೆ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕದ ಹೊಸ ಸರ್ಕಾರವು ತನ್ನ ಮೊದಲ 12 ತಿಂಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಗಮನ ಹರಿಸಿದೆ. ಈ ವಿಶೇಷ ಗಮನ ಅರೋಜನೆಗೆ ಆಧಾರವಾಯಿತು. ಹರ್ಷಚಿತ್ತ ರೈತನೆಂದರೆ ಅಧಿಕ ಸೆಮ್ಮದಿ ಬೆಳೆ, ಅದರಿಂದ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಜನಕ್ಕೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಆಹಾರ.

ತನ್ನ ಪ್ರಥಮ ವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ದಿನವಾದ ಇಂದು ಸರ್ಕಾರ ತಾನು ನೀಡಿದ ಭರವಸೆ ಹೇಳಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕಾರ್ಯಗತಗೊಳಿಸಿರುವ ಸಾಧನೆಗಳನ್ನೂ ಮತ್ತು ಈ ದಿವಸದಲ್ಲಿ ನಡೆಸಿದ ಸತತ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನವನ್ನೂ ಮೆಲುಕು ಹಾಕುತ್ತಿದೆ.

ಬೇಸಾಯದ ಬದುಕಿಗೆ ಭದ್ರ ನೆಲೆ

ಇಳಿದ 12 ತಿಂಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ರೈತರ ಶ್ರಮಕ್ಕೆ ತಕ್ಕ ಪ್ರತಿಫಲ ದೊರೆಯುವಂತಹ ಹಲವಾರು ಕಾರ್ಯಕ್ರಮಗಳನ್ನು ರೂಪಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ. ಅವುಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಮುಖ್ಯವಾದವು ಕೆಳಕಂಡಂತಿವೆ.

ಹತ್ತು ಎಕರೆಗಳ ಪರೇಗೆ ಭೂಕಂದಾಯ ಕೊಡಬೇಕಾಗಲ್ಲ.

ಕೃಷಿ ಉತ್ಪನ್ನಗಳ ಬೆಂಬಲ ಬೆಲೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಏರಿಕೆ.

ನೀರಾವರಿಗೆ ಬಳಸುವ ವಿದ್ಯುಚ್ಛಕ್ತಿ ದರದಲ್ಲಿ ಇಳಿತಾಯ

5 ಅಕ್ಷರಕ್ಕೆ ಪರೇಗೆ ಪ್ರತಿ ಅಕ್ಷರಕ್ಕೆ ರೈತರು ಕೊಡಬೇಕಾದ ದರ ಕೇವಲ 50 ರೂ.ಗಳು. 5 ಅಕ್ಷರಕ್ಕಿಂತ ಮೇಲಿನ ಪಂಪು ಪೆಟ್ಟುಗಳಿಗೆ ಕೊಡಬೇಕಾದ ದರವನ್ನು ಪ್ರತಿ ಯೂನಿಟ್ಗೆ 22 ಪೈಸೆಯಿಂದ 17 ಪೈಸೆಗೆ ಇಳಿಸಿದೆ.

ಎಲ್ಲ ಬುಟ್ಟಿ ಬೆಳೆಗಳ ಮೇಲಿನ ಕೃಷಿ ಆವಾಯಗಳ ರದ್ದು.

ನೀರಾವರಿಯ ಭೂಮಿಯ ಮೇಲಿನ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ತೆರಿಗೆಯ ರದ್ದು.

ಸಣ್ಣ ಮತ್ತು ಅತಿಸಣ್ಣ ರೈತರ ತಕಾವು ಸಾಲಗಳ ಮನ್ನಾ.

ಗೊಬ್ಬರಗಳ ಮೇಲಿನ ಮಾರಾಟ ತೆರಿಗೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಶೇಕಡ 5ರಿಂದ 2ಕ್ಕೆ ಇಳಿತ.

ಕಬ್ಬಿನ ಮೇಲಿನ ಸರಚಾರ್ಜ್ ಮನ್ನಾ ಹಾಗೂ ಕಬ್ಬಿನ ಕೊಳ್ಳುವ ತೆರಿಗೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಪ್ರತಿ ಟನ್ಗೆ 2.50 ರೂ. ಲಾಭ ದೊರೆಯುವಂತೆ ಮಾರ್ಪಾಡು.

1970ರ ಬರಗಾಲದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಣ್ಣ ಮತ್ತು ಅತಿಸಣ್ಣ ರೈತರಿಗೆ ನೀಡಿದ್ದ ಮೂಲಧನ ಸಾಲದ ಮನ್ನಾ.

ಕೃಷಿ ಕಾರ್ಮಿಕರಿಗೆ ಸಾಮೂಹಿಕ ವಿಮಾಯೋಜನೆ ರೂಪದಲ್ಲಿ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಭದ್ರತಾ ಕ್ರಮಗಳ ಜೊತೆಗೆ ಕೃಷಿಕಾರ್ಮಿಕನು ಪ್ರಾಕೃತಿಕ ಅಪಭಾತಕ್ಕೀಡಾಗಿ ಸತ್ತಾಗ 5,000 ರೂ.ಗಳನ್ನು ಆಪತ್‌ಧನವನ್ನು ನೀಡಲು ಸರ್ಕಾರ ತೀರ್ಮಾನಿಸಿದೆ.

ಸಣ್ಣ ಮತ್ತು ಅತಿಸಣ್ಣ ರೈತರಿಗಾಗಿ ಭವಿಷ್ಯನಿಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆಯನ್ನು ಆರಂಭಿಸಲು ನಿರ್ಧಾರ.

ಭೂಸುಧಾರಣಾ ಕಾಯಿದೆಯನ್ವಯ ಜಮೀನು ಪಡೆದ ರೈತರಿಂದ ಜಮೀನು ಹಕ್ಕು ಪಡೆಯಲು ನೀಡಬೇಕಾದ ಪ್ರಥಮ ಕಂತಿನ ಹಣವನ್ನು ಒತ್ತಾಯಸದೇ ಪೆಟ್ಟು ನೀಡಲು ನಿರ್ಧಾರ.

ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಎಲ್ಲ ರೈತರಿಗೂ ಅನುಕೂಲವಾಗುವಂತೆ ಬೆಳೆ ವಿಮಾಯೋಜನೆ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯವನ್ನು ವಿಸ್ತರಿಸಲು ಸರ್ಕಾರ ನಿರ್ಧರಿಸಿದೆ.

ಬಡುವಿನ ಹಂಗಾಮಿನಲ್ಲಿ ರೈತರಿಗೆ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಗಳಲ್ಲಿ 100 ದಿನಗಳ ಉದ್ಯೋಗ ನೀಡಿದೆ. ಈಗ 99 ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕುಗಳು ಈ ಯೋಜನೆಗೊಳಪಟ್ಟಿದೆ. ಈ ಯೋಜನೆಯ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಕೆಲಸಗಾರರ ದಿನಕೂಲಿಯನ್ನು ರೂ. 40ಂದ 6ಕ್ಕೆ ಏರಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ರೇಷ್ಮೆ ಮಾರುಕಟ್ಟೆ

ಸರ್ಕಾರವು ರೇಷ್ಮೆ ಉತ್ಪಾದಕರು ಮತ್ತು ರೇಷ್ಮೆ ವರ್ತಕರ ನಡುವೆ ರೇಷ್ಮೆ ಏನಿಮೆಯದ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಯನ್ನು ಮಾಡಿದೆ. ಇದರಿಂದ ಉತ್ಪಾದಕರಿಗೆ ಬಹಿರಂಗ ಪರಾಜಿನಲ್ಲಿ ನಿಗದಿಯಾದ ಬೆಲೆ ದೊರೆಯುವುದರ ಜೊತೆಗೆ ರೇಷ್ಮೆಯ ನಿಖರವಾದ ಪರೀಕ್ಷೆ ಎಂಗಡಲೆ ತೂಕ ಸಿಗುವಂತಾಗಿದೆ.

ಈ ಪರ್ಷ ರೇಷ್ಮೆ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಗಾಗಿ ವಿಶ್ವ ಬ್ಯಾಂಕಿನಿಂದ 83 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳು ಸರವು ದೊರಕಿದೆ.

ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ಪ್ರದೇಶಗಳಿಗೆ ನವಚೇತನ

ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ಪ್ರದೇಶಗಳನ್ನು ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಪಡಿಸಲು ಬೇಕಾದ ಸಮಾಕ್ಷೇ ನಡೆಸಿ, ಯೋಜನೆ ತಯಾರಿಸಲು ಸರ್ಕಾರವು ಹಿಂದು ಸಮಿತಿಯನ್ನು ನೇಮಿಸಿದೆ. ಈ ಸಮಿತಿಯು 50 ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕುಗಳನ್ನು ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕುಗಳೆಂದು ಪರಿಗಣಿಸಿದೆ. ಈ ಪ್ರದೇಶದಲ್ಲಿ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕೈಗೊಳ್ಳಲು ಮುಂದೆ ಬರುವ ಉದ್ಯಮಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಹಲವಾರು ಉತ್ತೇಜನ ಮತ್ತು ರಿಯಾಯಿತಿಗಳನ್ನು ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ. ತೀರ ಸಣ್ಣ ಬುಟ್ಟಿ ಕೈಗಾರಿಕೆಗಳಿಗಾಗಿ ವಸಾಹತು ನಿರ್ಮಿಸಲು ಡಚ್ ಸರ್ಕಾರದಿಂದ 18 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳ ಸರವನ್ನು ಪಡೆಯಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಹೈದರಾಬಾದ್ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಪ್ರದೇಶಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ :

ಹೈದರಾಬಾದ್ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಪ್ರದೇಶದ ಸಮಸ್ಯೆಗಳನ್ನು ಪರಿಹರಿಸಿ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಗೆ ಸಲಹೆ ನೀಡಲು ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಉನ್ನತ ಮಟ್ಟದ ಸಮಿತಿ ಯೊಂದನ್ನು ನೇಮಿಸಿದೆ. ಈ ಪ್ರದೇಶದ ಪ್ರಮುಖ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳಲ್ಲೊಂದಾದ 20 ಲಕ್ಷ ಎಕರೆಗಳಿಗೆ ನೀರಾವರಿ ಒದಗಿಸುವ ಕೃಷ್ಣಾ ಮೇಲ್ಮಂಡ ಯೋಜನೆಯು ಕಾರ್ಯ ಭರವಸೆ ಸಾಗುತ್ತಿದೆ.

ಕಾವೇರಿ ನೀರು ಹಂಚಿಕೆ:

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ 10 ಅಂಶಗಳ ಯೋಜನೆ:

ಕಾವೇರಿ ನೀರನ್ನು ಸಂಬಂಧಪಟ್ಟ ರಾಜ್ಯಗಳು ಸಮಾನಾಗಿ ಮತ್ತು ಉಪಯುಕ್ತವಾಗಿ ಬಳಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗುವಂತೆ ಇತ್ತೀಚೆಗೆ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರವು 10 ಅಂಶಗಳ ಸೂತ್ರವನ್ನು ತಯಾರಿಸಿದೆ. ಈ ಸೂತ್ರ ಒಪ್ಪಿಗೆಯಾದಲ್ಲಿ ಈ ವಿಷಯವನ್ನು ಪರಸ್ಪರ ಅರಿವು ಮತ್ತು ಸಹಕಾರದಿಂದ ಪರಿಹರಿಸಿಕೊಳ್ಳಲು ಸಾಧ್ಯವಾಗಿ ಅನೇಕ ವರ್ಷಗಳ ವಿವಾದ ಇತ್ಯರ್ಥವಾಗುತ್ತದೆ.

ನೀರಾವರಿ ವರಾಹಿ ಮತ್ತಿತರ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳು:

ಕುಂದಾಪುರದ 19.8 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳ, ವೆಚ್ಚದ ವರಾಹಿ ನೀರಾವರಿ ಯೋಜನೆಯು ಭಾರತದಲ್ಲಿ ಪಶ್ಚಿಮಕ್ಕೆ ಹರಿಯುವ ನದಿಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಅತ್ಯಂತ ದೊಡ್ಡದಾದ ಪ್ರಥಮ ಯೋಜನೆ. 1982ರ ಹೊತ್ತಿಗೆ ಪೂರ್ಣಗೊಳಿಸಲು ಉದ್ದೇಶಿಸಿರುವ ಈ ಯೋಜನೆಯಿಂದ ಈ ಪ್ರದೇಶದ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಸಾಮಾಜಿಕ ಪ್ರಗತಿಗೆ ಹೆಚ್ಚಿಗೆ ನೆರವು ದೊರೆಯಲಿದೆ.

ಇತ್ತೀಚೆಗೆ ಕಾರ್ಯಾರಂಭವಾದ ಹಾರಂಗಿ ಮತ್ತು ಹೇಮಾವತಿ ಯೋಜನೆಗಳು ರಾಜ್ಯದ ರೈತರಿಗೆ ನೀರಾವರಿ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ವಿಸ್ತರಿಸಲು ಸರ್ಕಾರ ಕೈಗೊಂಡ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನವನ್ನು ಸಫಲಗೊಳಿಸಿವೆ.

ನೀರಾವರಿ ವಿಸ್ತರಣೆಯ ವಿಚಾರದಲ್ಲಿ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಆಸಕ್ತಿ ಪಡಿಸಿರುವ ಸರ್ಕಾರ 1980-81ರಲ್ಲಿ 20,000 ನೀರಾವರಿ ಛಾವಣಿಗಳನ್ನು ಕೋಡಲು ಹಾಗೂ 20,000 ಸಂಪುಷ್ಕಿಣ್ಣುಗಳಿಗೆ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಒದಗಿಸಲು ಯೋಚಿಸಿದೆ.

ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಉತ್ಪಾದನೆ:

135 ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್ ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಉತ್ಪಾದಿಸುವ ಕಾಳೇನದಿ ದ್ವಿತೀಯ ಜಲವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಘಟಕವು 1980ರಲ್ಲಿ ಆರಂಭಗೊಂಡಿದೆ. ರಾಯಚೂರಿನ ಧರ್ಮಲ ಘಟಕದ ಕೆಲಸ ಮುಂದುವರಿಯುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಈ ಯೋಜನೆಯು 210 ಮೆಗಾವಾಟ್ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯದ ಮೊದಲ ಘಟಕವು 1983ರಲ್ಲಿ ಅಷ್ಟೇ ಸಾಮರ್ಥ್ಯದ ಎರಡನೆ ಘಟಕವು 1984ರಲ್ಲಿ ಕಾರ್ಯಾರಂಭ ಮಾಡಲಿದೆ.

ಸಾಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಕ ಕ್ಷೇತ್ರ:

ನಮ್ಮ ಸಾಂಸ್ಕೃತಿಕ ಪರಂಪರೆಯನ್ನು ಜೀವಂತವಾಗಿ ಉಳಿಸಿ ಬೆಳೆಸುವ ಸಲುವಾಗಿ ಸರ್ಕಾರವು ಜಾನಪದ ಕಲೆ ಸಾಹಿತ್ಯಗಳ ಬೆಳವಣಿಗೆ ಸಾಕಷ್ಟು ಹಣ ಖರ್ಚು ಮಾಡುತ್ತಿದೆ. ಇತ್ತೀಚೆಗೆ ಅಸ್ತಿತ್ವಕ್ಕೆ ಬಂದಿರುವ ಜಾನಪದ ಮತ್ತು ಯುವಗಾನ ಅಕಾಡೆಮಿಯು ನಮ್ಮ ಜಾನಪದ ಕಲೆ ಮತ್ತು ಕಲಾವಿದರ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಯ ಕಡೆ ಗಮನ ನೀಡಲಿದೆ. ರಾಜ್ಯದ 33 ಜನ ಖ್ಯಾತ ಸಾಹಿತಿ ಕಲಾವಿದರಿಗೆ ಆವರ ಜೀವನ ಪರ್ಯಂತ 500 ರೂ.ಗಳ ಮಾಸಿಕ ವೇತನ ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸಾಧನೆ ಮತ್ತು ಯೋಜನೆ:

ಮಂಗಳೂರು ಮತ್ತು ಗುಲ್ಬರ್ಗಗಳಲ್ಲಿ ಎರಡು ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾನಿಲಯಗಳ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆ. 140 ಫ್ರೆಫ್ರೆಡರಾಟ್‌ಗಳು, 29 ಜ್ಯೂನಿಯರ್ ಕಾಲೇಜುಗಳು, 51 ಪ್ರಥಮ ದರ್ಜೆ ಕಾಲೇಜುಗಳು, 11 ಶಿಕ್ಷಣ ಕಾಲೇಜುಗಳು, 9 ಪಾಲಿಟೆಕ್ನಿಕ್‌ಗಳು, 12 ಇಂಜಿನಿಯರಿಂಗ್ ಕಾಲೇಜುಗಳು, 4 ಫಾರ್ಮಸಿ ಮತ್ತು ಟಿಷದಿ ಕಾಲೇಜುಗಳು ಮತ್ತು ಒಂದು ಒಂದು ಕಾನೂನು ಕಾಲೇಜಿನ ಆರಂಭಕ್ಕೆ ಮಂಜೂರಾತಿ.

ಸುಮಾರು 16 ಲಕ್ಷ ಮಕ್ಕಳಿಗೆ ಉಚಿತ ಪಠ್ಯಪುಸ್ತಕ ಮತ್ತು ಮಧ್ಯಾಹ್ನದ ವ್ಯಾಪಾರದ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆ.

ಹರಿಜನರ ಸರ್ವಾಂಗೀಣ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿಗಾಗಿ 1980-81ನೇ ಸಾಲಿಗಾಗಿ 64 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳ ಸಂಘಟಿತ ಯೋಜನೆಯನ್ನು ಸಿದ್ಧಗೊಳಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಗರಿಜನರಿಗಾಯೇ 3.8 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳ ಉಪಯೋಜನೆಯೂ ಸಿದ್ಧವಾಗಿದೆ.

ಶಾಲಾಂತರ ಮಕ್ಕಳು ಓದಲು ಅನುಕೂಲವಾಗುವಂತೆ ದೀಪ ಮತ್ತು ಸೀತೋಪಕರಣಗಳನ್ನು ಒಳಗೊಂಡ ಭಜನ ಮಂದಿರಗಳ ಸ್ಥಾಪನೆ;

ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಸಂಪರ್ಕ ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥೆಗಾಗಿ, 18.7 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳ ಅನಕಾರ.

36 ಅನಗತ್ಯ ಮಂಡಳಿ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಿತಿಗಳ ರದ್ದು.

ಸಾಂದ್ರ ಗ್ರಾಮಾಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿ 175 ತಾಲ್ಲೂಕುಗಳ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ.

ಸಿನ್ಯತ್ತ ಸರ್ಕಾರಿ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿ ನೌಕರರ ಸೇವಾವಧಿ ವಿಸ್ತರಣೆ ಮತ್ತು ಮರು ನೇಮಕದ ರದ್ದು.

ಬಡವರಿಗೆ ಒಂದು ಲಕ್ಷ ಜನತಾ ಗೃಹಗಳು.

ರಾಜ್ಯೋತ್ಸವಕ್ಕೆ ಮುಂಚೆ 2.5 ಲಕ್ಷಕ್ಕೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಕಡತಗಳು ವಿಲೇವಾರಿ ವರ್ಗಾವಣೆಗಾಗಿ ಹಾಗೂ ಮುಂಬಡ್ತಿಗಳು ವಿಚಾರದಲ್ಲಿ ಒತ್ತಾಯ ತರುವವರ ವಿರುದ್ಧ ಕಟ್ಟುನಿಟ್ಟಿನ ಕ್ರಮ.

1981ರ ನವೆಂಬರ್ ಒಂದರ ವೇಳೆಗೆ ರಾಜ್ಯದ ಪ್ರತಿಹಳ್ಳಿಗೂ ಕುಡಿಯುವ ನೀರು ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಾಥಮಿಕ ಶಾಲಾ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ ಕಲ್ಪಿಸಲು ಯೋಜನೆ ಯು ಪೂರ್ಣಗೊಂಡಿದೆ.

1981ರ ನವೆಂಬರ್ ಒಂದರ ವೇಳೆಗೆ ಎಲ್ಲ ಭೂ ವಿವಾದ ಪ್ರಕರಣಗಳ ನಿರ್ಧಾರ.

1980ರಲ್ಲಿ 1,000ಕ್ಕೂ ಹೆಚ್ಚು ಹಳ್ಳಿಗಳಿಗೆ ವಿದ್ಯುತ್ ಸೌಲಭ್ಯ.

ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ಕುಶಲಕರ್ಮಿಗಳ ಕುಟುಂಬದ ಯುವಕರಿಗಾಗಿ ಒಂದು ಸಮಗ್ರ ಯೋಜನೆ ಸಿದ್ಧ.

ಹೊಸ ಆರನೆಯ ಪಂಚವಾರ್ಷಿಕ ಯೋಜನೆಗಾಗಿ 2,400 ಕೋಟಿ ರೂ.ಗಳ ಹೂಡಿಕೆಗೆ ಅಂತಿಮ ಸ್ವರೂಪ ನೀಡಲಾಗಿದೆ.

ಜನತೆಯ ಆಗತ್ಯಗಳನ್ನು ಪೂರೈಸಲು ಕಂಕಣಬದ್ಧವಾದ ಯುವಸರ್ಕಾರ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ.

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ವಾರ್ತಾ ಮತ್ತು ಪ್ರಚಾರ ಇಲಾಖೆ.

Editor: Zafar Futehally

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Cover Picture: Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Photo by: E. Hanumantha Rao

NEWSLETTER
FOR BIRDWATCHERS

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Editorial

Combined March-April Issue: I have been on tour a great deal lately and regret that I was not able to produce the March issue of the Newsletter in time. The March and April issue is therefore a combined one.

A Visit to the Nandi Hills: The Nandi Hills only about 40 miles from Bangalore is a pleasant locality for birdwatchers. One unusual feature is that the road to the top of the 4000 foot hill merges well into the hill side and is a good example of how these roads should be made. Nandi is the place where in the early* of this century Eucalyptus hybrids were developed and the hill has a large population of these exotics. This is a pity from the birding point of view for there would have been many more birds if the endemic flora had been retained. However, one has to be grateful for such greenery as these Eucalyptus provide.

There are a number of evergreen species on the top of the hill and one of them which I was able to identify (because of the sign board on the tree) was *Mimusops elengi*. This tree appears to have a wide range for it also grows around the sea coasts in Bombay as well as in the interior of Maharashtra. JS Gamble in the Flora of Madras says that it is "A small tree with rather small leaves scarcely three inches long in dry forests, a large one with much larger leaves in damp localities." The large number of fruit trees in Nandi provides sustenance for the Bonnet Macaque which appeared to be well fed; and judging by the number of young the troop is in a healthy state.

The bird life consisted of many interesting species. There were a couple of Indian Kestrel whose deep yellow legs attracted attention. Mr. & Mrs. Richard Fitter, who were with us, commented on the colour differences between the Indian and the European race. The Indian Kestrel is just light brown with black streaks on the breast. I think I saw a female of the redbreasted flycatcher. This is a bird which I have seen after many years, my last recollection is of a bird which used to visit our garden in Bombay in winter. We also saw the little brown flycatcher which can be identified by its very large eye. This too was a bird which used to visit our garden in Bombay. There were several leaf warblers which were difficult to identify. The minor variations in the colour of the eye brows and the minute differences in the colour shading of the breast and the rump feathers are diagnostic marks for people with better eyesight and identification abilities. One bird defied identification and defeated even Richard Fitter at least on that day. This was a grey and yellow minivet like bird and several hours spent in the study looking over reference books failed to yield any conclusive result. But Richard pursued his investigations and was able to confirm the next day that the bird was the yellowthroated bulbul (*Pycnonotus xantholaemus*). The Handbook Vol.6, page 95, says "Resident, uncommon and patchily distributed."

Orissa(?), Southern Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Mysore in the dry Chitaldrug and Bangalore Districts. One old record in Kerala (Anamalai Hills) - Wm. Davison, 1886, Ibis:146; from c.600 to 1200m. Affects sparse thorn scrub jungle interspersed with some large trees among broken stony hillocks."

In the evening members of the Bird Foundation of Bangalore came over to meet the Fitters and we had an enjoyable walk to the two tanks, one at Dodda Gubbi and the other at Billeleshwara. The latter contained a large number of marsh, wood and common sandpipers. There were many blackwinged stilts, a large congregation of little and median egrets and a few large egrets. There was also one example of the black form of the little egret which does not appear in the Handbook. There were some brownheaded gulls, a couple of grey herons, a fair number of painted storks, as well as white ibis. There were several interesting birds of prey including pariah kite and brahminy kite. One bird high up looked like the short-toed eagle.

Incidentally during a walk with the Fitters on the previous day in the same area we saw both the European cuckoo as well as the Indian cuckoo. The Indian cuckoo is slightly larger (?) than the European one and the tail markings are diagnostic.

Around the Dodda Gubbi Tank the pallid harrier and the marsh harrier kept the birdwatchers enthralled by their extraordinary powers of flight. Here we were also able to see three species of kingfishers the whitebreasted, the pied, and the little or common.

Some of the other birds we saw during our walk were the Indian roller, the tree pipit, spotted dove, common green bee-eater, common swallows, wire-tailed swallows, pied bushchat, ioras, hoopoes and koel. There were some species of larks which could not be clearly identified.

The Koel Puzzle: Mr. & Mrs. Richard Fitter were in the Maldives for a week before coming over to Bangalore and while there they came across a koel puzzle. While staying on Villingili they saw several pairs (at least three) of koels (*Eudynamys scolopacea*) in the thick scrub which had grown up in the coconut plantations. However, there were no crows at all, as all the house crows were deliberately exterminated by shooting some ten to fifteen years previously as they had become pests. The problem is how the koels are maintaining themselves in the absence of their normal nest providers. Do our readers know of any koel population existing in the absence of crows?

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds: The RSPB is apparently Europe's largest Nature Conservation Society. Founded in 1889, its present membership exceeds 3,30,000. It looks after 80 nature reserves and is most active in investigating offences against acts relating to the protection of birds. It has stimulated young peoples interest in birds by outings, courses, competitions, and, at present there are over a 1,00,000 members of its Young Ornithologists Club.

Those of our readers who are in a position to support the RSPB might consider becoming Corporate Members. Those interested should write to Mr. Michael R Chandler, Development Department, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG 19 2DL.

Some New Records from Madras City by V Santharam

During the last 2-3 years I have been lucky in sighting some new birds - new at least to me. In this note I summarise all such new sightings. I am grateful to my friends from the "Madras Naturalists' Society" especially R.V. Mohan Rao, S. Ramesh Bhatt and B. Ramanathan and also to Mr. Bill Harvey of the British Council for their help, encouragement and guidance.

(1) Indian Blackcrested Baza (Aviceda leucophotes) : Some of my friends have reported seeing this rare raptor in the Guindy Deer Park, behind the Raj Bhavan. I had been trying to locate it for the past two years without success. But on 11-12-1980 I had the good fortune of seeing it. There were two birds gliding among the partly submerged trees of the KK. Tank which was filled up due to the rains. They settled on the bare branches of a tree, and in a few minutes another pair joined them. All the four were sitting close to one another and were preening. Despite the distance we noticed their long black crests moving as the birds turned their heads. The head, chin, throat and upperparts were black. There was a thick black band on the lower breast, and horizontal streaks on the belly and abdomen. Of the two birds which sat facing us, one had the streaks over the whole belly and the other had only 4-5 streaks beyond the black band. The upper breast and the abdomen and belly were white. There seemed to be some traces of white on the wings as they preened their backs. The size of the birds were about that of a jungle crow. According to Dr. Ripley's "Synopsis" the range of this bird (subspecies; leucophotes) is: "Peninsular India in Western Mysore (?) and Kerala; Ceylon (winter visitor); east in southern Burma, in tropical evergreen and moist deciduous forest. In the rest of its southern range it appears to be a migrant but the distribution remains to be worked out". The other subspecies A.l. eyama is said to be resident from "Nepal east along the Himalayas through Assam and northern Burma to China. A winter migrant to the Indochinese and Malayan subregions and possibly Ceylon(?)". The Madras museum has in

its collection a specimen of the A.l. leuphotes which according to the "Guide to the Bird Gallery" has been specifically recorded from Travancore and Nellore.

On 24-1-81 we saw at least one bird at the grove in Manali, about 19 kms north of Madras. It was not shy and let us approach it close and so we had a very good look at it. Once or twice it pounced on some insect and caught them clinging to the branches of the tree and returned to a convenient spot to eat it. It was also seen holding the prey in its claws. The previous records by our friends here suggest that this species is a winter visitor to Madras.

(2) Malay or Tiger Bittern (*Gorsachius melanolophus*): Yet another new record from Guindy Park for this year is the Tiger Bittern. This bird was seen on 12.12.80, perched on a low branch of a ficus tree. There was thick undergrowth around and the rain water was stagnant in some places. The bird was bigger than the pond heron. On seeing us, the bird assumed its typical "On Guard" posture - stretching up the neck and facing us. We were quite close to the bird and there was good light (Time about 11.00 a.m.). We were able to watch the bird in this posture for 1-2 minutes during which period the bird stood without any movement whatsoever. The underparts were buffish white, the feathers on the throat down to the lower breast as compared to the belly and abdomen which was heavily streaked with dark brown stripes. The legs were grayish. The eyes were yellow. When the bird turned and took wing, I could clearly see the blackish head and occipital crest. The underparts also appeared to be dark. Before I could notice the wing pattern the bird had disappeared from view. I remember having seen the same sort of bittern during the last year at the same locality.

(3) Shorteared Owl (*Asio flammeus*): On the morning of the 18th October, I had been to the Adyar Estuary and at about 7.30 a.m., I saw an owl, about the size of a house crow being chased by some crows from the wooded banks of the Theosophical Society Campus. It had dark brown upperparts marked with white and black (?) and the tail (not very long) was barred brown and white. There was a distinct buffish patch on the primaries on the upper surface of the wings. The underparts were buffish white with black markings quite similar to that shown for the species in the "Hamlyn Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe" including the black patch near the bend of the under wing. The throat was pale brown. The owl flew steadily with occasional wing beats and alternate gliding like kites and settled on a neem tree in a nearby garden. The crows chased it again. It provided a good view, flying quite close until it moved further north and disappeared. On 31-12-1980 at about 5.00 p.m. I saw this bird on the ground in scrub land at Adyar Estuary. I had not noticed it until it flew when we approached it to within 7 to 8 foot. It was immediately chased by crows and it flew over the river. According to Prof. KK Neelakantan there have been previous sightings of these birds at Marina Beach 30 to 40 years ago.

(4) Orangeheaded Ground Thrush (*Zoothera citrina citrina*): Some 3-4 years

back on a rainy day in November, I remember seeing a gaudy coloured bird in our backyard, foraging on the ground. It was orange and blue in colouration. As I was not very familiar with birds in these days since I had no binoculars with me, the bird was left unidentified. But recently on 23-11-80 when I was away at Vedanthangal, I was told about a bird answering to the description of the orangeheaded ground thrush seen in our backyard. I also saw this bird in the grounds of the Theosophical Society on 1-1-1981. I noticed the orange head and belly and the slaty blue back and wings clearly. Comparing my previous sighting with this I believe that it was the orangeheaded ground thrush which was seen in our backyard on both the occasions.

(This bird was perhaps *Zoothera citrina cyanotus* whose range includes Madras. Editor)

(5) Collared Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*): On 11th April, 1980, we saw a bird very similar to our common swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) but slightly smaller, flying along with some swallows at Adyar estuary over the river in the evening. It was brown above, white below, a brownish throat-band, white chin and throat, short and almost square-cut tail. The flight appeared to be less swift than that of the common swallow. I doubt if this could be any other bird but the collared sand martin whose distribution is given as Northern India. There are two races, according to the 'Synopsis' the habitat of one (*R.r. diluta*) being "near river and banks" and for the other (*R.r. iijimae*) it is "usually near cliffs or over bodies of water". Even later on, during the last few months we have been seeing these martins (1 or 2 at a time) at the estuary, along with swallows. The dates of other sightings are: 12.10.80, 19.10.80 and 10.12.80. Mr. Bill Harvey, who is quite knowledgeable on birds has also confirmed this identification.

(6) Thickbilled Warbler (*Phragmaticola aedon*): A single bird was seen at the Theosophical Society near the casuarina grove, along the Adyar river on a small bush. The size was bulbul minus, brown above, white tinged with brown below. Legs were dusky, bill being flesh coloured. We also heard a subdued 'tschuck' which was neither loud nor sharp like that of the blyth's reed warbler (*Acrocephalus dumetorum*). There was no supercilium. The tail was constantly flicking up and down. The feathers on the head was at times erected appearing like a short crest. The bird allowed a close approach and was seen for a couple of minutes.

(7) Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella cinerea*): On 10.12.1979 at the open meadow at the Adyar estuary at about 4.00 p.m., I had seen a group of 14-15 rufous short-toed larks flying against a cloudy sky. Their undulating flight with ups and downs were very graceful. Once on the ground, they merged perfectly with their surroundings. The upper parts were brown with a rufous tinge and the usual markings; a pale but prominent supercilium, slight wingbars and buffish white underparts. On the sides of the breast, half hidden by the wings was a black spot. I next saw them exactly on the same day in 1980 and at the same spot. There were about 15-20 birds and they always moved in a group flying in a close bunch when approached. On 16.12.80 also I could see 3-4 birds.

(8) Blackcapped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pileata*): A recent addition to my Madras bird list is the blackcapped kingfisher at the Theosophical Society along the Adyar river. We have so far seen this attractive kingfisher only on two occasions. The first was on 15-12-80 - the day before the solar eclipse. That morning we could catch some glimpses of that bird which seemed wary and often flew away. It resembled the whitebreasted but had a distinct black cap and white collar and rusty-tinged white underparts. Also the blue on the back appeared to be much brighter than that of the whitebreasted. The next encounter was on 17th March. A single bird was seen on a coconut frond on the open ground at Adyar estuary.

(9) Little Green Heron (*Butorides striatus*): There were one or two individuals of this species at the Theosophical Society during January to March '80. We had our first look at this species on 5.1.80. There were at least 2-3 birds flying about and settling on the trees close to the Adyar river. They resembled the pond heron but lacked the white in the wings. Subsequent visits confirmed the species and we were fortunate in seeing this crepuscular bird in broad daylight feeding at the edge of the water or resting and sunning on the islets in the river. My last encounter with the bird was on 21-3-80. Perhaps this bird is a local migrant visiting us during the colder months.

(10) Booted Hawk-Eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*): On many occasions I have seen this handsome eagle last year at Guindy Deer Park (where it appears to be a winter visitor) either soaring in the air or at rest on trees. This year on 13th October I saw this bird at the Adyar estuary flying about in the company of kites over the open ground. It was kite-like and the size was also about that of a kite. But the square tail, the greyish markings on the wings and upper tail coverts (seen from above), the creamish crown and pale underparts and in overhead flight "reminiscent of dirty white Neophron Vulture with blackish band along trailing edges of wings" (Dr. Salim Ali) gives away its identity in the field. Apart from this phase, there is a dark-phase which could be mistaken for an immature brahminy or pariah kites. Some crows chased it and so it landed on the ground close to where I was standing and as the morning light was good, I had a good look at it at very close quarters and could notice the 'booted' legs. The bird is said to be mainly a winter visitor to India but it was quite interesting to note in the Handbook that this species may "nest sparingly and locally in peninsular India, doubtfully recorded as such in Salem in Madras State (Theobald) and circumstantially in Gujarat (Salim Ali)".

(11) Broadbilled Sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*): Mr. Bill Harvey pointed out a couple of these birds in the marshy grounds in the Adyar estuary on 12-10-80. They were amongst other waders mostly stints and sandplovers. One of them was more brownish, presumably in summer plumage and the other in paler winter dress. They were slightly bigger than the little stint and had darker upperparts (snipe-like markings), larger, slightly downcurved beak, white belly, streaks on breast, white supercilium that forks out above the eye and short greyish legs. It could easily be confused with the little stint with which it is usually seen. We have been seeing these waders here quite regularly afterwards and it appears that we have been overlooking this species and passing it off as a stint.

(12) Flycatchers: Most of the flycatchers in Madras seem to be winter visitors due to the paucity of sightings during other periods. We have so far recorded five species - the brown (*Muscicapa latirostris*), redbreasted (*M. parva*), tickell's blue (*M. tickelliae*), paradise (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) and blacknaped flycatchers (*Monarcha azurea*). All the five species could be seen at the Guindy Deer Park. The brown flycatcher is a regular migrant and so also the paradise flycatcher (in the sense that they could be seen regularly during the colder months). But the other three species have been seen irregularly and though they also could be regular migrants, we have no records to prove it. The redbreasted and blacknaped flycatchers have been seen only twice so far both at Guindy Park. The first sighting was on 1.11.79. Next I saw them on 11.12.80 and 12.12.80 respectively. The Tickell's had been seen on 3-4 occasions both at Guindy as well as at the Theosophical Society. This bird appears to be partial towards bamboos as I have always seen them on bamboo clumps.

(13) Large Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*): Although the blackheaded cuckoo-shrike (*C. melanoptera*) is a fairly common bird around Madras (again mainly in winter), we had not observed the large cuckoo shrike earlier. On 11.12.80 at Guindy we saw about 6-7 of these birds on the Eucalyptus trees bordering the polo field perched on the higher branches. They were about the size of a Myna and quite dumpy in appearance. When one started flying to another tree, it was followed by another bird and yet another in a "follow-the-leader" fashion. The flight was undulating with irregular flapping of wings, somewhat like that of a Hoopoe's.

The Bird Mystery of Lunglie, Mizoram with comments on the bird phenomenon of Haflong by KR Rao

Whenever we speak of bird mysteries we are reminded about the phenomenon in Haflong about which so much has been reported. However a similar phenomenon occurs in Lunglie in Mizoram. The extraordinary case of birds getting killed by dashing themselves against the walls of a building in Lunglie was brought to my attention when I visited the town in 1976 during the course of a faunistic survey of Mizoram. The building concerned belongs to Dr. Doliana a retired civil surgeon and I was informed that this building is the target of "attack" by birds during the late monsoon months.

The building stands majestically at a height of 1210 m amidst mountain ridges within the town. The building has three powerful electric bulbs fitted on the same plane in front. These lights can be seen from far away. The building and the lights are prominent land marks because it is situated at the highest altitude of the locality and there are no other houses within a distance

of a 100 feet below. Dr. Doliana has seen birds dashing themselves against the roof and the walls of his building for several years. Apparently certain weather conditions are necessary for this phenomenon to occur. It happens in the late monsoon period between September and October and only on moonless nights. The sky should be overcast with mist and fog accompanied by a slight drizzle. The wind direction is also important. The number of birds which get killed annually vary from 300 to 500 and 6 to 8 species of birds are involved. I found that on the inner sides of the walls of the building feathers of dead birds were kept as wall decorations. I collected these feathers for identification and it seems to me that the birds involved in these accidents are: Indian Moorhen - Gallinula chloropus indica Blyth; Grey-fronted Green Pigeon - Treron pompadura; Indian Emerald Dove - Chalcophaps indica; Indian Threestoed Forest Kingfisher - Ceyx erithacus; Indian Ruddy Kingfisher - Halcyon coromanda (Latham); Hooded Pitta - Pitta sordida cucullata Hortlaub; Drongo Cuckoo - Surniculus lugubris; Cuckoo - Cuculus canorus.

This phenomenon is exactly similar to the bird mystery of Haflong which was first reported by Salim Ali as early as 1962 and later studied by EP Gee in 1964. In the case of Lunglie the birds apparently fly from west to east where as in Haflong the birds fly in from the north. The most striking resemblance between the situation in Haflong and Lunglie is that the birds are all resident species and green pigeons are the largest number of victims. Theodore Bhaskaran in his report on Haflong mentions the presence of Indian Water Rails and Lesser Whistling Teals but their numbers were insignificant.

A survey of literature shows that there are several records of such incidents from various parts of the world. Drs. Robinson & Chason (1927) observed nocturnal accidents of Indian Ruddy Kingfisher at light houses and at light strips of Malacca in autumn. Dr. Salim Ali has reported on the frequent casualties of Indian Emerald Doves and Green Pigeons in coffee plantations of Karnataka and Kerala. The Indian Threestoed Forest Kingfisher is known to fly with great force and damage the glass planes of forest rest houses. Dr. Elliot McClure (1974) in his book on Migrations and Survival of the Birds of Asia mentions similar instances occurring at Fraser Hills in Malaysia and Daltons pass in Luzon (Philippines). Apparently the people of Northern Luzon set up artificial lights and reflections on foggy moonless nights and catch a large number of birds. Peter Jackson referring to the Haflong Mystery observed that Hooded Pittas and Indian Ruddy Kingfishers are involved in the catches at Fraser Hills and Dalton pass as well as in Jatinga. The same situation holds good at Lunglie.

Many theories have been offered to explain the peculiar behaviour of the nocturnal flights of these birds but none appear to be convincing. Some of them such as change of magnetic fields of the underground water and changes in atmospheric electricity cannot be accepted as the birds of the plains do not seem to be affected by these questionable environmental conditions. Another suggestion made was that birds mistake the artificial lights for the light of the dawn. This theory is not convincing for as Dr. Salim Ali had stated "if the wind direction is not right no birds will come to the petromaxes, bonfires or flames". This suggests that artificial lights by themselves are not enough to attract the birds. The wind direction is of crucial importance.

Interesting Behaviour of Caged Parakeet by G. Sudarshan Rao

Work on the ecology of the Roseringed Parakeet is in progress at the Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University since the bird is a destroyer of crops in India.

To conduct the experiment on its food habits five female roseringed parakeets were kept in a cage (size 7.2m X 3.3m X 3m) and all were marked with rings of different colour. Behind the cage there were two flame of the forest trees. In the month of March 1980 these trees were in full bloom and it was observed that parakeets fed on the white fleshy part of the flower including the gynoecium of those trees discarding the coloured calyx and petals.

On 1st March 1980 a male roseringed parakeet was seen approaching the cage and then feeding one of the female parakeets inside the cage. Every day the bird came in the morning and in the evening. After feeding for sometime on the white fleshy portions of the flowers of *Butea frondosa* trees the male parakeet approached the cage and the female inside the cage gave out its screeching calls. The male sat on the outside of the cage and fed the female by regurgitation. When other female parakeets tried to approach the male they were chased away. Every day the male parakeet fed the same female only and we have photographic evidence of this. If on any day the male parakeet arrived late the female appeared to invite it by its calls. The process of feeding lasted for nearly 20 days and afterwards the male was not seen in the vicinity.

The feeding of a female by the male by regurgitation is a part of the courtship behaviour of the roseringed parakeet (Lamba, BS., 1966, Nidification of some common Indian Birds). At the time of pair formation the female parakeet attracts her mate by various means like its calls, and by posturing with wings half spread and head moving in different directions. The response of the male is to rub his head on the head of the female, and also feeding by regurgitation. These activities have been noticed in the wild state.

The incident of the roseringed parakeet feeding a caged female is an interesting phenomenon. It is possible that the male was trying to form a pair but could not do so as the female was inside the cage.

Two additions to the birds of Kerala by L. Namassivayam and PS. Sivaprasad

As part of a pilot project of the Kerala Natural History Society we were on the look out for teals in Malabar. On 6-12-80 we came across a jheel near Feroke about 15 km northeast of Calicut city on the borders of Calicut and Malappuram Districts.

There were many cotton teals (*Nettapus coromandelianus*), Bluewinged Teals (*Anas querquedula*) and the majority were Lesser Whistling Teals (*Dendrocygna javanica*) all of them constituting a gathering of c.200 teals.

While observing them through our binoculars we saw a small single black duck like bird with a prominent white-bill and forehead and it was evident that it was a Coot (*Fulica atra*). To the best of our knowledge this bird has not been recorded before from Kerala and if so this is a new species for the State.

The second addition is the Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*). A male Redstart was observed at Mathur in Palghat district (c.16 km SW of Palghat Town) on 20-11-1980. The bird allowed the observers to see it for an hour. This black and orange chestnut bird with its characteristic habit of shivering its tail was a male Redstart.

We also came across the Blackwinged Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) nesting, and the bird was on a fully completed nest on a Palmyra tree. There is a previous record of this bird by Mr. Nanu Nair on 6-7-1980 when he found this species at Korayar about 7 km. south of Walayar.

White Storks on Migration by AC Karat, RP Haran and John P Selvan

These migrating white storks (*Ciconia ciconia*) were sighted twice, on Nov. 11th 1979 and Dec. 2nd 1980 respectively.

On the first occasion a group of large birds were sighted at about 5.45 p.m. on college hill near CMC Campus, Vellore, coming from the west. At that time a definite identification could not be made, as it was already dark. However, on visiting the hill at 5 a.m. the following morning, the birds were identified as white storks, the identification being at about 20 yards with a good pair of binoculars (8 x 40).

On this occasion, 21 birds were seen. When we approached the birds on the 10th evening under cover of partial darkness to within a few feet of a group of four birds, one of them took wing but hovered overhead for a while. Later all the four flew on to a rock 50 yards away. Fearing that we might disturb them we made no further attempt to approach them.

Next morning at 5 a.m. we were again on the hill and we were able to observe five birds at close quarters. The sky was overcast and it was drizzling. We then noticed to our dismay that the main body of the birds was on the next hill.

All of a sudden one of the birds took off from the main body to fly over us. When it circled back, the birds on our hill also flew away to follow and join the main body of birds. The sun had not yet come up and we took up an observation post on the main hill and watched the birds as they preened and pecked at the ground for almost 1 1/2 hours. The same bird which flew away from the main body on the first occasion, again made a few circles over the other birds. At this moment a fusillade of shots were fired from the nearby police firing range. This proved too much for the birds which at once took flight and headed again in a westward direction.

On the second occasion, on December 2nd 80, sixteen of them were spotted soaring over college hill by one of us (John P Selvan). They circled over the hill for about 10 minutes and slowly drifted out of sight only to reappear again after 20 minutes. Evidently disturbed by the presence of the observer, they flew off eastward. According to the Book of Indian Birds 11th Edition by Dr. Salim Ali, these birds "are rare south of Deccan". This raises the question as to whether there is now an established route through this area of south India?

We would like to stress certain points which we thought are significant and worthy of consideration. Firstly why did the birds select a hill as a bedding-down place? Is it because these large landmarks are easily identifiable from the air, or have the birds discovered by experience that hills are safer because of being less inhabited? Secondly, do these groups always have a leader? The behaviour of one bird in the November flock certainly suggested this. Thirdly, how much do they depend on the sun for migration? It may be noted that on both occasions, the birds wanted to settle down round about sunset and on the first occasion displayed a marked reluctance to leave before a clear sun in the sky, even though it was fairly late in the morning. Fourthly, did the delayed monsoon have anything to do with the late arrival in '80, or is three weeks an acceptable deviation from the normal?

May we end with a plea to all members to report sightings of these beautiful birds so that their course may be charted. If the editor so desires we would be willing to undertake this task since we have developed a special interest in these intrepid voyagers of the sky.

Crows resent intrusion by others during a meal by CK Ananthasubramaniam

A crow hates to share its meal with another but I have observed that it is willing to share it with its partner. When another crow sneaks up for a bite the owner of the kill drives it away. When the mate comes up for a bite it is welcomed. It does happen sometimes however that even the mate is not allowed to share in the kill unless it is very persistent.

Sometimes I have noticed that when a pair of crows have killed a mouse they do not allow any others to come near it. Once I saw a pair eating the tastier parts of a mouse and then fly away. Another pair lurking in the background jumped on to the kill and started to eat the remains. But the former pair came back and the scavengers had to leave the scene. This indicates that when the original killers of the mouse had flown away the left overs did not become public property.

I have a small bowl of water kept outside on the roof of my house for thirsty birds and a pair of crows use it regularly. Quite often when they have something to eat they hold on to the morsel with their claws while they drink. I once saw a morsel fall into the bowl and the crow could not retrieve it. It did not allow a flock of Blue Rock Pigeons to come near the bowl for 1 1/2 hours.

Export of Birds (Courtesy Hindustan Times, March 2, 1981)

India seems to be heading the dubious list of exporters of wild birds - birds which, after a long ordeal resulting in thousands of casualties, end up in the fashionable drawing rooms of the West at fancy prices. Of the 7.5 million birds trapped every year India's contribution is at 1.8 million. That anyway was the average over a seven year period ending 1976, figures of which are available.

Surely there is big money, but not for the local trapper. A Ringnecked Parakeet, which fetches the Indian trapper Rs.1/- is sold for Rs.225 in London.

The predominant destination of Indian birds, however, is Japan. About 40 per cent go to Japan. Italy, France, Belgium, and the US followed Japan.

Of the 1,160 species of birds recorded in India, 289 have been identified as exported since 1970. Although the majority of the Indian birds exported were widely distributed, such as the Red Avadavat, some rare and even protected species had also been involved according to Tom Inskipp (under the auspices of Washingtons Animal Welfare Institute Tom Inskipp has provided the account of Indian scenario).

Inskipp has reported extensively on the trapping methods involved. Primarily birds are trapped in UP and Bihar.

Correspondence

Birdwatching in the Punjab by D Krupanidhi

As a Member of the Border Security Force I get the opportunity to visit remote places and I always carry the book of Indian Birds by Salim Ali with me.

On 27-12-80 I happened to visit the Border area near the International Boundary in Punjab and I found an area of 1800 m by 200 m covered with water weeds. From a distance I could hear the high pitched notes of the lapwing and the sound of the take off by a flock of cormorants.

That particular day was foggy and the visibility was limited only to 10 to 15 yards. The first group of birds that I saw were a flock of Purple Moorhens (*Porphyrio poliocephalus*) moving about swiftly with the characteristic flicking of tails. The flock was not disturbed by my presence and continued to search busily, probably for insects in the woods.

A flock of coots were floating gracefully on the water and the white patch on the forehead was clearly seen against their black bodies.

A flock of blackwinged stilts had to make way suddenly for a formation of cormorants which landed on the water. Alongside was a solitary grey heron with its head tucked into its shoulders. A redwattled lapwing appeared calling loudly. I could also see a few Cotton Teals and a

Pied Kingfisher. A little later the fog disappeared around 10 a.m. and I could see a few barheaded geese, probably in transit to their friends on the banks of the river Sutlej near Ferozepur. Last year I had the good fortune of watching these Greylags from a vantage point on the river Sutlej.

Rosy Pastors at Ahmedabad by PS Thakker

I saw a flock of Rosy Pastors for the first time this season on 1st September at 6.10 a.m. (Sunrise 6.22 a.m. Sunset 6.58 p.m.). Their roosting place was CN Vidyalaya and when they flew they gave the appearance of a swarm of locusts. Every morning one could see thousands of birds between 6.15 and 6.30 a.m. They left their roosts on several days at 6.27 a.m. in two or three large flocks and returned between 6.15 and 6.45 p.m. in flocks of varying sizes.

On the evening of 12th September I attempted a rough count of these birds by classifying them into large groups of a 150 to 200, medium groups of 35 to 50 and small groups of 10 or less. The total number of flocks I counted was a 170 large, four medium, and 63 small flocks. On this basis I concluded that there were 30,000 birds in all.

After November the large flocks had vanished, but even in January one could see birds every morning in various localities. It is very interesting to see these birds even in urban environments.

The Chestnutheaded Bee-eater by PT Thomas

Like Professor Higgins I am a man devoted to peace and a quiet life. There is nothing I desire more than a life free of strife and contention. Nevertheless, and much against my natural inclination, I am constrained to cross swords (only metaphorically, though) with Mr. R.P. Haran and others in the CMC, Vellore, who have said (NLBW, Jan. 1981) that the birds I saw in the CMC campus were the Bluetailed Bee-eaters, and not the Chestnutheaded ones as I took them to be. I am afraid I cannot accept this conclusion. I have checked and re-checked my notes and memory. The birds were indeed the Chestnutheaded Bee-eaters!

As for the Bluetailed Bee-eater, Messrs Haran, Karat and Solvan may have seen the bird in the campus; I am in no position to dispute it although I don't think I saw one there myself, either in the winter or in the summer. I shall indeed look out for the bird on my next visit to Vellore. And when the occasion comes, I shall hope to be able to do some birding with the propounders of the 'Bluetailed' theory and show them where they went wrong. For all my disagreement with my friends' conclusion about the identity of the bird, I want to thank them for taking the trouble to comment on my article. This has had at least one good result which is that I know now that there are some persons in the CMC who are interested in bird-watching.

Our Contributors

Mr. KR Rao, Zoological Survey of India, 100 Santhome High Road, Madras 600 028.
 Mr. G. Sudarshan Rao, Senior Research Fellow, Office of the Ornithologist, Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad 500 030.
 Mr. L. Namassivayam, 13/111, Kattukandi Paramba, Kammath Lane, Kozhikode, 673 002.
 Mr. PS Sivaprasad, 18/399, G.H. School Road, Chalapuram, Kozhikode 673 002.
 Mr. AC Karat, CMC, Vellore.
 Mr. R.P. Haran, CMC, Vellore.
 Mr. John P Selvan, CMC, Vellore.
 Mr. CK Ananthasubramaniam, 2, Chinnappa Gounder Street, Coimbatore, 641038.
 Mr. D Krupanidhi, Dy. Commandant, 43 Bn BSF, Fazilka, Pin 152123, Punjab.
 Mr. PS Thakker, 17, Swaraj Nagar, Ambawadi, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad 380 015.
 Mr. PT Thomas, Ornithological Society of Central India, 14, Old Sehore Road, Indore 452001, Madhya Pradesh.
 Mr. V. Santharam, 12-A, Leith Castle South Street, Madras 600 028.

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Prakash Gole
277 Sindh Housing Society
Poona 411 007.

March 16, 1981

The Editor,
Newsletter for Birdwatchers,
Bangalore 562134.

I am collecting information on the wintering Barheaded Geese (*Anser indicus*) in India. I shall be most grateful if I could request the contributors/subscribers of the Newsletter to please send me information on the following points:

1. The estimated number of wintering *A. indicus* in their respective areas and their dates of arrival and departure,
2. Whether their number has remained steady or increased or decreased in recent years and possible reasons for this change,
3. Whether any persecution-----hunting/poaching takes place and estimated quantum of such kills,
4. Any other relevant information.

I shall be very grateful if this appeal is published in the Newsletter.

Yours sincerely,

(Prakash Gole)

Editor: Zafar Futehally

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Cover Picture: Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Photo by: E. Hanumantha Rao

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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NEWSLETTER
FOR BIRD WATCHERS

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Editorial

A request to contributors: Quite often letters/articles come in which are so carelessly written that it takes many minutes/hours to sort them out and prepare them for publishing. When long lists of birds are sent they should be grouped under the relevant families unless there is a good reason for not doing so. This little effort is educative for the writer and the reader and the list becomes more relevant in the ornithological sense. When referring to birds it is pointless (on most occasions) to say that 'I saw bulbuls, swifts, swallows etc'. Which species of bulbul? Hand written notes may please be made as legible as possible. Many scrawls, I am sure, contain interesting facts, but unravelling their meaning is not easy, and may lead to the printing of statements not intended by the writer.

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Birds and aeroplane accidents: The Bombay Natural History Society is to be complemented on making reasonable headway in its difficult project on 'An Ecological Study of Bird Hazards at Indian Aerodromes'. This is being undertaken for the Ministry of Defence who are obviously more than willing to finance this investigation, as accidents are likely to escalate with increasing number of aircraft unless precautionary measures are taken. 'The IAF had a total of 197 bird strikes during the five year period from 1975 to 1979..... In civil aviation there were 156 bird strikes during the one year period from 1st January to December 1979. The cost of damage amounts to more than 5 crores rupees annually'. The BNHS intend to do the following:

Collect bird strike data together with remnants of birds for identification of the species involved; intensive observation of the aerodrome area covering a radius of 25 km to collect data on bird movements; altering the grass cover on airfields to check whether habitat manipulation can be a deterrent; experimenting with repelling devices; a status survey of vultures in the Indian Sub-continent to find out how far local populations travel in search of food and for breeding purposes.

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Newsletter Finances: Postages, printing charges for the cover and cyclostyling charges are all keeping pace with inflation. Today there is Rs.1600/- in the Newsletter account, but this cannot see us through the next eight months. Mr. Theodore Baskaran of the postal service has kindly offered to assist with postal concessions - an attempt which the Editor gave up long ago owing to the inability to circumvent bureaucratic fences. May Baskaran's initiative succeed. If any of our readers can help with advertisements that would be very welcome.

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Observations on Pair Formation by A.Navarro, S.J.

Some birds pair for life, while others only for a single annual breeding season. Nevertheless, some pairs may be successful with more than one brood within the same breeding season.

On May 10, 1965, whilst returning from my observations along the Bulbun Lake (Khandala) beside the Lonavla drinking water reservoir in the fields down below, I heard the noise of a large gathering of birds, as if they were engaged in a conversation. Certainly there were no songs as such. Once I reached the fields, after a 5-minute walk I did notice a large field totally covered with birds, like sparrows in appearance, but through my binoculars I discovered that this large gathering of birds was of the Malabar Crested Larks.

I found it difficult to evaluate the total number assembled within the field area at that time. There must have been around six to seven hundred Malabar Crested Larks or may be even more. The whole assembly was in constant motion as if they were participating in a non-stop dialogue. Nevertheless, now and then, a kind of musical note came floating out. I visited the field for seven days in succession and I noticed that each successive day there were fewer birds, until on the eighth day I found the field totally empty. After that I noticed the appearance of the Malabar Crested Larks at their usual nesting grounds.

The pairing or selection of the partner is usually done by the male. The dance, the bowing, the offering, and the singing is done by the male to seduce or charm the female. The ornithologist has studied and classified the

bird songs and has understood the motivation of these songs and has given names adapted to the meaning of those songs. Since their songs are connected with their breeding activities, there is a song called the advertising song, though it may have a double meaning, that is, attracting or repelling. In the second instance, the songs may change in volume, in pitch and in speed.

Weaver Bird: The weaver birds, on the other hand, adopt a totally different procedure with regard to the pairing or selection of their partners. It is the female here that selects her mate. This is how it is conducted.

At the time of the breeding season, there is a total segregation of the sexes. Once the weaver males have selected the tree where they will establish their colony, from that time onwards the males start building their nests. The presence of any female at this time will not be tolerated, as at once the males will harass her out of the colony under construction.

After the weaving of their nests is accomplished, a massive group of females invades the colony, examining the inner and outer parts of the nests, making their choice from among the different nests. The male builder of the nest selected by the female becomes her partner.

The question of the choice becomes a paradox. Since the female is not able to weave, the male is totally responsible for the weaving of the nest and its maintenance during the process of incubation and rearing of the young weavers.

Malabar Whistling Thrush: The fauna of Khandala changes all the year round but the Malabar Whistling Thrush is one of the common birds of the region.

Some birds stay longer than others; some stay for a short time; others are passers-by, in transit; but the Malabar Whistling Thrush belongs to the group known as 'permanent resident'. By nature it is shy and cautious.

Throughout the year the Malabar Whistling Thrush is confined to the forest showing a preference for evergreen forests, its abundant shade and moisture combined with streams and rivulets. Rarely will it be seen perching on trees, most of the time it will be on the ground, hopping and flying from boulder to boulder along the gurgling streams and rushing torrents.

It is only during the monsoon, when they leave the forest, that some come up to Khandala village in search of closed villas and bungalows where they may settle in gardens or along verandahs. If not disturbed, they will even build their nests under the roofs of these buildings or on window-sills. Others will fly along the cliffs, gorges and mountain sides looking for caves and waterfalls. They can build their nests in there and safely rear their chicks. From experience I can say that behind any waterfall there is always a whistling thrush nesting.

Though it seems that some Whistling Thrushes have a special liking for tunnels along the railway track as their breeding resort, some nests can be seen at the entrance of a tunnel while others will be located rather deep inside it.

The way the Malabar Whistling Thrush selects its partner looks more like a game of hide-and seek. Once I was bird-watching on Duke's Nose ravine when I heard a noisy group of Malabar Whistling Thrushes, about 8 to 10 of them, the males choosing the females. At a great speed they flew to a large tree. For a few seconds there was silence, but all at once the chasing operation was resumed. Since I had a tape recorder with me I recorded the sounds, as the males were chasing the females. They were uttering sharp notes that form part of their usual whistling songs. At the same time the females were uttering a series of shrieks, when suddenly they all flew to another tree, a hundred yards away. The same procedure was repeated once more. After that the whole group flew down the ravine and I lost track of them.

A few days later on June 3, 1972, I resumed my bird-watching with the express purpose of solving that which puzzled me during my previous observations. The two main components of the male chasing the female are: action and song. On this subject some ornithologists are of the opinion that 'the advertising songs or calls tend to attract the females...' 'also possibly the songs have some effect of impressing the males' domination of the females'.

Blackbird: The Blackbirds arrive at Khandala about the middle of April and depart at the beginning of August. Their arrival and departure are adjusted to the monsoon season.

On arrival the Blackbirds will be seen in forests, gardens and open country in large numbers. Soon after

their arrival they will be seen moving in small groups searching for fruits and berries. As it is the end of the dry season these are not always easy to obtain.

For some time the small groups will keep together, but later on the males will reveal their identity by their short calls repeated constantly on the move. I will classify these calls as advertising calls. Some ornithologists are of the opinion that auditory recognition cues are more effective than visual ones. The importance of the call in recognition hardly needs to be stressed.

A short time later the pairs are formed. The groups disintegrate and from now onwards each pair will find its way into the forest and select the spot where it will build a nest.

The main factors which lead the blackbird to select Khandala for its breeding activities are: the heavy rainfall which goes up to 156 inches or even more in some years, and the heavy, foggy skies of Khandala which persist throughout the monsoons.

At this time the vegetation is lush. Earthworms, snails and other insects are found in large quantities. This is the right food for their little chicks and their parents, as this is the season when they change their diet from fruits and berries to earthworms, snails and insects.

At the beginning of their breeding season, the males sing a variety of loud, rich and melodious songs, at times even mimicking the songs of other birds, perching high up on the tallest trees. The best songs are sung early morning and late evening, although they can be heard at any time of the day. Many bird lovers and ornithologists consider the Blackbird to be the best songster among the Indian Thrushes.

The Blackbirds will often be seen on the ground. If disturbed they will fly up onto the trees. The Blackbirds and the Whistling Thrushes are the commonest birds in Khandala region during the monsoon.

By the time of their departure they have become shy and cautious. They stop singing and gradually take off and their absence appears mysterious. By the middle of September no Blackbird is seen in Khandala region.

In the month of October, during an hour's trek through a footpath along the forest I counted over 30 Blackbird nests. For about 20 years I have been going up to Khandala during the monsoons with the purpose of observing the colour patterns of the young Blackbirds. Only on a few occasions I have seen them in such plumage. A pale slaty colour with a very slight olive tinge, no black cap and whitish dots more prominent on neck, chest and abdomen.

Birds of Sariska Tiger Reserve by Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma:

Sariska Tiger Reserve lies at the eastern end of the Aravalli hills. It has beautiful tropical dry deciduous and tropical thorn forests, dominated by Dhoc (Anogeissus pendula); Salar (Boswellia serrata); Tendu (Diospyros) Khair (Acacia catechu) and Ber (Zizyphus maurantiana) trees.

To compile a checklist of birds of this area, I visited this place several times since 1978 in almost all seasons, but the final list which is presented here should not be taken as complete, and probably many more species will be added to this as our experience of the area increases. The Status of many birds is doubtful, as these wander a lot. Among these are Indian pitta, Paradise flycatcher, Golden oriole, Large cormorant, Black breasted quail, Alpine swift, Whitebrowed bulbul, Tickell's blue flycatcher. Birds which visit the area only during summer and the rainy season are Blue cheeked bee-eater, Bluetailed bee-eater and Pied crested cuckoo. Some are apparently passage migrants and these include Rosy pastors and Common rosefinch. In all 200 species have been identified.

This area is rich in birds because it provides many types of habitats. For water birds there is Ruparcel river, a pond near Kankwari and many water holes in the forest. Painted spurfowl and Indian pitta skulk in the forest along the streams in the valleys; and in the same forest Bonelli's hawk eagle sits on a large tree. Brown fish owls sit near a forest water hole, and in the scrub lands Doves, Partridges, Sandgrouse, Nightjars, Bee-eaters, shrikas, Babblers, Warblers, Bulbuls, Minivets, Flycatchers, Robins, Chats - are numerous. Mynas, Crows, Sparrows and Pariah Kites live near many villages in the forest. The stony ground around Tal Uriksha is fit habitat for buntings, thrushes, and chats. The agricultural fields near villages provide homes for Munias, Weaver birds, Sparrows, White eyes, Finches and Saras cranes.

The Historical Kankwari fort where Dara Shikoh, elder brother of Emperor Aurangzeb is said to have been imprisoned, stands on a low hill in the middle of the forest. For watching birds of prey, Vultures, Swifts, Martins and Swallows one is recommended to climb to the top of this fort.

Siliserh lake and many other lakes lie outside the sanctuary and are favourite wintering grounds for many water birds and here I have seen most of the water birds noticed in the adjacent Delhi area.

Checklist:

<u>Family</u>	<u>Species</u>
Podicipedidae:	Little Grebe
Phalacrocoracidae:	Large Cormorant; Indian Shag; Little Cormorant.
Ardeidae:	Grey Heron; Purple Heron; Pond Heron; Cattle Egret; Large Egret; Median Egret; Little Egret; Night Heron; Little Bittern.
Ciconiidae:	Whitenecked stork; Black Stork; Blacknecked stork.
Anatidae:	Shoveller.
Accipitridae:	Blackwinged Kite; Crested honey Buzzard; Pariah Kite; Shikra; Sparrow Hawk; Longlegged Buzzard; White-eye Buzzard; Bonelli's hawk-Eagle; Tawny Eagle; Steppe Eagle; Greater Spotted Eagle; Black Vulture; Griffon Vulture; Longbilled Vulture; Whitebacked Vulture; White Scavenger Vulture; Pale Harrier; Short-toed Eagle; Crested Serpent Eagle.
Falconidae:	Lagger Falcon; Peregrine Falcon; Redheaded Merlin; Kestrel.
Phasianidae:	Painted Spurfowl; Black Partridge; Grey Partridge; Common Quail; Rain Quail; Jungle Bush Quail; Peafowl.
Turnicidae:	Common Bustard-Quail.
Gruidae:	Sarus Crane.
Rallidae:	Brown Crake; Whitebreasted Waterhen; Indian Moorhen.
Charadriidae:	Redwattled Lapwing; Yellow-wattled Lapwing; Blacktailed Godwit; Common Redshank; Greenshank; Green Sandpiper; Wood Sandpiper; Common Sandpiper.
Recurvirostridae:	Blackwinged Stilt.

Burhinidae:	Stone Curlew.
Glareolidae:	Indian Courser.
Laridae:	River Tern.
Pteroclididae:	Indian Common Sandgrouse; Painted Sandgrouse.
Columbidae:	Green Pigeon; Blue Rock Pigeon; Rufous Turtle Dove; Ring Dove; Red Turtle Dove; Spotted Dove; Little Brown Dove.
Psittacidae:	Alexandrine Parakeet; Roseringed Parakeet Blossomheaded Parakeet.
Cuculidae:	Pied Crested Cuckoo; Common Hawk-Cuckoo; Koel; Sirkeer Cuckoo; Crow-Pheasant.
Strigidae:	Collared Scops Owl; Indian Great Horned Owl; Dusky Horned Owl; Brown Fish Owl; Spotted Owlet.
Caprimulgidae:	Indian Jungle Nightjar; Common Indian Nightjar.
Apodidae:	Alpine Swift; House Swift; Palm Swift
Alcedinidae:	Lesser Pied Kingfisher; Common Kingfisher; Whitebreasted Kingfisher.
Meropidae:	Bluecheeked Bee-eater; Bluetailed Bee-eater; Green Bee-eater.
Coraciidae:	Indian Roller.
Upupidae:	Hoopoe.
Bucerotidae:	Common Grey Hornbill.
Capitonidae:	Crimsonbreasted Barbet.
Picidae:	Wryneck; Goldenbacked Woodpecker; Mahratta Woodpecker; Pygmy Woodpecker.
Pittidae:	Indian Pitta.
Alaudidae:	Red Winged Bush Lark; Ashycrowned Finch-Lark; Short-toed lark; Crested lark; Eastern Skylark.
Hirundinidae:	Plain Sand Martin; Dusky Crag Martin; Common Swallow; Cliff Swallow; Striated Swallow.
Laniidae:	Grey Shrike; Baybacked Shrike, Rufous-backed Shrike; Brown Shrike.
Oriolidae:	Golden Oriole.
Dicruridae:	Black Drango; Whitebellied Drongo.
Sturnidae:	Brahminy Myna; Rosy Paster; Starling; Pied Myna; Common Myna; Bank Myna.
Corvidae:	Tree Pie; House Crow; Jungle Crow.
Campephagidae:	Common Wood Shrike; Large Cuckoo Shrike; Small Minivet
Irenidae:	Common Iora
Pycnonotidae:	Redwhiskered Bulbul; Whitecheeked Bulbul; Redvented Bulbul; White browed Bulbul.

Muscicapidae:	Yelloweyed Babbler; Common Babbler; Large Grey Babbler; Jungle Babbler; Redbreasted flycatcher; Tickell's Blue Flycatcher; Greyheaded Flycatcher; Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher; Paradise Flycatcher; Streaked Fantail Warbler; Franklin's Wren Warbler; Rufousfronted Wren Warbler; Indian Wren Warbler; Ashy Wren Warbler; Tailor Bird; Blyth's Reed Warbler; Booted Warbler; Orphean Warbler; Lesser Whitethroat; Chiff Chat; Yellow browed Leaf Warbler; Greenish Willow Warbler; Blue throat; Magpie Robin; Black Redstart; Brown Rock Chat; Collared Bush Chat; Pied Bush Chat; Isabelline Wheatear; Pied Wheatear; Indian Robin; Blue Rock Thrush; Black throated Thrush.
Parodae:	Grey Tit.
Sittidae:	Chestnutbellied Nuthatch
Motacillidae:	Tree Pipit; India Pipit; Brown Rock Pipit; Yellow Wagtail; Yellowheaded Wagtail; Grey Wagtail; White Wagtail; Large pied Wagtail.
Dicacidae:	Thickbilled Flowerpecker.
Nectariniidae:	Purple Sunbird.
Zosteropidae:	White eye.
Ploceidae:	House Sparrow; Spanish Sparrow; Yellow throated Sparrow; Baya; Blackthroated Weaver Bird; Streaked Weaver Bird; Red Munia; Whitethroated Munia; White backed munia.
Fringillidae:	Common Rosetinch.
Emberizidae:	Blackheaded Bunting; Redheaded Bunting; Whitecapped Bunting; Crested Bunting.

Bird watching in Mehsana Dist. by P.S. Thakker:

I visited Jakhai village on 7th November 1980. It is a small village in Sami Taluka of Mehsana district. The population of the village is very small since it has hardly 60 to 70 houses.

There is a tank in this village to provide drinking water. The river Banas flows very near to the village, at a distance of only one kilometer. The tank is surrounded by Prosopis juliflora which is locally known as 'Gando Boral'. The area is thickly wooded by this species. There

were few other trees of neem and piloo on the tank bund, and a peepal tree and a banyan tree were situated near to the tank.

I visited the tank at 10.00 a.m., 1.00 p.m. and 5.15 p.m. on the same days i.e. 7th November 1980. There were many birds in addition to the common birds like sparrows, crow, peacock, doves and vultures. The birds which I saw included:

Charadriidae:	Fantail Snipe; Redwattled Lapwing; Stint species.
Recurvirostridae:	Blackwinged Stilt.
Motacillidae:	Grey Wagtail; Pied Wagtail; White Wagtail; Blue-headed Yellow Wagtail; Black-headed Yellow Wagtail.
Threskiornithidae:	Spoonbill.
Ardeidae:	Little Egret; Pond Heron.
Pycnonotidae:	Redvented Bulbul; Whitecheeked Bulbul.
Podicipedidae:	Little Grebe.
Accipitridae:	Shikra.
Dicruridae:	Whitebellied Drongo; Black Drongo.
Upupidae:	Hoopoe.
Alcedinidae:	Pied Kingfisher.
Muscicapidae:	Jungle Babbler; Orpheon Warbler.
Meropidae:	Little Green Bee-eater.

One interesting thing I noted was a snake going through the tank from one end to the other. When it reached the other side it got itself into a group of blackwinged stilts. The stilts were not afraid and did not fly over. Only two birds changed their position and that too only very little. I went to that place after fifteen minutes, the snake was very much there, and was apparently a 7-5 feet long Rat Snake (Dhaman).

Status of the Blacknaped Monarch Flycatcher in Saurashtra
by Dr. B.M. Parasharya:

In the Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan it is sated that the Indian Blacknaped Monarch Flycatcher (*Monarcha azurea styani*) is a widespread resident of the Indian continent subject to erratic local and winter movements. It affects well wooded country, evergreen or mixed deciduous forests and secondary jungle. It is a regular resident of Gujarat but the only recorded information for Saurashtra is about a male bird collected by Salim Ali at

Dwarka situated on the western coast of Saurashtra. The bird was collected from a euphorbia jungle in October 1943. In his article on the Birds of Gujarat (JBNHS 52:749-750) Salim Ali has recorded its presence at many other places in Gujarat except Saurashtra. Dharmakumarsinhji in his Birds of Saurashtra refers to the presence of the bird at Chanch in Amreli district.

Lavkumar Khacher has seen the bird in the Gir Forest and he believes that it breeds there along the banks of the Hiran river. He has also seen a single male bird at Rajkumar College, Rajkot, 12 years ago during winter, and at Jamnagar during winter. Shivrajkumar saw it in Hingolghadh (Rajkot district) on 11.9.1962. He came across the bird again in September 1970 when it was ringed. Shivrajkumar feels that the bird wanders away after the breeding season in the Gir Forest and Girnar over to the surrounding areas in the late monsoon and post monsoon period. Pradyum Desai confirms having seen a pair at Victoria Park, Bhavnagar in the early 70's.

While doing a nest census of the Indian Reef Heron (*Egretta gularis*) at the New Port-Bhavnagar I saw a male bird searching for insects on a tamarind tree at a height of about 3 m on 9.6.80. I was surprised to find this bird in such an isolated area, for the Port is about 7 km from Bhavnagar which is the nearest place with a reasonable amount of vegetation.

It would be useful to get more information about the presence of this flycatcher in Saurashtra.

Effects of Urbanization on the Bird Fauna of Bangalore
by A.K. Chakravathy:

In five years (1975-79), six species of land and five species of wetland birds have been reduced to near-extinction in the city. Rare species like the Chestnutbellied Nuthatch, Verditer Flycatcher, Chestnutheaded Bee-eater and three others show no signs of revival in the areas surveyed. Incidentally 14 Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters were seen emerging from a tall eucalyptus tree and air gleaning on insects in August, 1978. The birds stayed on for about 15 days there.

Of a total of 122 species, the density of 14 were below ten.

At the current rate of increase in the degree of urbanization, roughly five species per year would be endangered.

A highly significant proportion of birds breed in the wooded areas on the outskirts of Bangalore. So, conservation of the wooded areas is very important.

Migratory birds were more severely affected by urbanization than the native species.

The introduction of 'Fishing Scheme' in 1977-78 at the pools eliminated all waterbirds. Only residents like Coots, and Dabchicks reappeared at the termination of the fishing operation.

Elements of the built-up environment favoured only a few species of birds: House Sparrow, House Crows, Common Myna, and Blue Rock Pigeon. Some of these birds are increasingly becoming a nuisance to the public.

Taking the above facts into account a suitable conservation policy must be implemented in the city.

Crow-pheasant killing a Hare by Dr. Fred Simmonds:

I was staying at Bamboo Banks at Mudumalai on 28th January 1981 when, at about 7 a.m., outside my bedroom window, there was a lot of squealing as of a harassed piglet. On going to see what was happening, I looked down into the red 'beady eye' of a crow-pheasant (Centropus sinensis) glaring at me from directly under the window. The bird then started pecking at something out of sight at the base of the wall, and the squealing resumed. It was a young hare (Lepus nigricollis) being attacked by the bird, and was prevented from escaping in one direction by the wall and, hampered by debris from free lateral movement, was penned in by the bird, being severely pecked, and, it subsequently proved killed. However, later in the morning when I saw the hare's body it had not, as far as I could see, been eaten - although by that time a mongoose was also hanging around.

Adyar Estuary in Danger by V. Santharam:

We recently came to know that the last bit of open ground on the northern side of the Adyar Estuary is to be made into a housing colony. As you might be aware this place is a potential breeding area of a number of species like the yellow and red wattled lapwings, stone curlews, black bellied finch larks, redwinged bushlarks, pipits, bee-eaters and kingfishers and besides provides a feeding ground to a number of species including migratory wagtails, short-eared owls which were recently observed here, short-toed larks, rollers, drongos, plovers, bushchats, kites and other birds. The adjoining marshes, the backwaters, islets and the mudflats have a variety of migrant waders which use this as a place of rest during their migration. Recently there has been a big concentration of Avocets, described as rare in South India by the Handbook and we counted up to 72. Mr. Bill Harvey, a keen ornithologist, working at the British Council counted some 89 on the same day. Besides we have recorded Ringed Plover (Charadrius hiaticula) which is recorded as a vagrant in India and at present there are a couple or so of them at the estuary.

Flamingoes, Sand Martins, Frigate birds and a number of other unusual birds have been recorded from here occasionally. My 3-year records show that the estuary area together with the Theosophical Society Campus on the Southern side, wooded and well-protected, contain no less than 130 species, which is an unusual number when one takes into consideration the very small area and the fact that this is situated right inside the 4th largest city in India.

The officials ruled out the question of a sanctuary here because of the proximity of the airport, but this is not a valid objection.

Bird suicides in the North Sea:

Gas flares over the North Sea oil rigs are visible over long distances against the completely dark background of the Winter. The Natural Gases from oil rigs cannot be exploited fully and therefore have to be burnt off some 40 to 80 meters above the sea level. Migratory birds going to their winter homes in warmer climates are attracted to these flares, as moths to a flame, and are roasted alive. During September and October the toll is the highest, particularly during foggy weather.

British Ornithologist Bryan Sage who managed to get some information regarding the bird deaths says the first accident occurred in 1973. The oil companies have refused journalists access to oil rigs to study the phenomenon, yet one Norwegian journal was able to get some information from two offshore workers that starlings and thrushes were among the maximum killed. Sage says that according to some workers on the rig, in the night of 25-26 October 1977, 1500 dead birds were counted on the platform of an oil rig. But since many roasted birds would have fallen directly into the sea, the toll may have been as high as 3,000 at that spot. The exhausted birds literally catch fire and plummet into the sea, forming small smoke clouds as they hit the water.

Most oil companies ignore the problem totally and protests have not been able to move them. Only British Petroleum seems to be willing to let an Ornithologist study the problem. Protective measures can be taken only if one knows the details involved.

Drought in Vedanthangal:

This year the Vedanthangal bird sanctuary is dry as there were no rains in October-December. Although Madras city had good rains, Chingelput district did not have usual rains and as a consequence drought conditions prevail. I have been going to Vedanthangal every month since August but until the last week of November, there was no water there. The Forest Department announced that there was no water even in Mid-December. Even at Karikili Sanctuary, nearby, there is no water. Though some water-birds are seen around, there is no sign of nesting. Ducks are also seen in flight, circling the tanks as in the case of other water birds, and flying away. The Forester at Vedanthangal is happy, as he believes the drought would give a chance to the Acacia arabica, which have been planted in the lake on a large scale, to come up and provide more nesting place for the birds in future.

Correspondence

News from Gopeshwar by Dr. (Miss) Asha Chandole:

The Scarlet Minivets I saw at Tungnath at 2750m in May had come down to Duggalbitta, the base of the mountains 2000m in October last week. And now they are all in the Oak forest in Gopeshwar at 1600m. There are beautiful

Tickell's Blue Flycatchers too, and the Paradise Flycatchers of this forest have disappeared, as have the Collared Bushchats and Drongo from Gopeshwar itself. Whitecheeked, and Redvented bulbuls alike seem to dominate the place. But come to think of it I did not see a single red whiskered. I am reporting about October. Tree Pies which normally abound in the periphery of the Oak forest have now come down in the open on the rock sides. May be they do not get enough light and heat in the shaded forest.

Behaviour of a rock pigeon by Aasheesh Pittie:

On 24th January 1981, our class at college was just beginning (1000 hrs.) when I glanced out of the window. On the air-vent of a building, across the road sat a Blue Rock Pigeon (Columba livia). Suddenly the bird took off and rose to a height of approx., 80-90 feet and - started hovering.

A bird which I had never seen doing what it was at that moment, had its wings to stay in one place - like an oddly coloured, extra fat, amateur Kestrel!! It maintained position for 3-5 seconds and then sort of tumbled over, then again resumed hovering.

This cycle - hover, tumble, hover - the bird executed five times and then sailed down to its former perch.

What could have prompted the fellow to hover? Was it some kind of display? May be some readers would know.

Chestnut-headed Bee-eater in Hazaribagh by Ajana:

On the afternoon of the March 16th I was attracted outside by the sound of a bird which I could not remember ever having heard before; a rather loud, 'stswee, stswee, stswee, stswee'. On locating its source imagine my delight to view a bird which I had also previously never seen. High above me, making a very colourful sight on a bare branch of a rusty shieldbearer, was a Chestnut-headed Bee-eater (Merops leschenaulti). Its most noticeable features were a bright yellow throat terminating in a dark band, a chestnut coloured head, and the absence of any central and projecting tail pins.

The same evening I encountered a pair of them sitting in a young Sal tree, at a distance of about 150 yards from

the first sighting, and again at the same place the following morning, that time there being three of them. I had never before come across a Chestnut-headed Bee-eater in Hazaribagh, although there are many small green Bee-eaters (*Merops orientalis*), these also sometimes without tail pins.

Possibly I should add that I live fairly close to a badly denuded forest area so that those who are more knowledgeable can perhaps assess the likelihood of them still being in the area. Such an attractive bird, once seen, can surely not easily be forgotten, but to see one again would be almost as thrilling as seeing it for the first time.

Brahminy ducks (*Tadorna ferruginea*) in large numbers
by Dr. R.S. Bidwe:

On 8th and 10th March 1981, a group of bird-watchers visited Kavadi village, about 10 km from Pune. Surprisingly we noticed only migratory birds on the river bank of Mula-Mutha. The birds that we observed were:

About 20 White necked storks (*Ciconia episcopus*)
About 20 White ibis (*Threskinornis melanocephala*)
About 10 Brahminy duck (*Tadorna ferruginea*)
Over a 100 Garganey teals

There is a possibility that all these migratory birds were on their return journey, and the availability of adequate food might be one of the reasons for their staying back so late.

Birds killed at lights - a mystery by Lav Kumar Khacher:

Reference the note in the March-April 1981 issue of the Newsletter by KR Rao on page 8. I have been very quietly reading notes on the Jatinga avian suicides appearing at regular intervals. So now we have a few more suicidal birds in Mizoram and it seems bird populations in other parts of S.E. Asia also tend to commit Harakiri. My few comments-

1. The so called resident birds do migrate locally. So, if the timings of these mass harakiris are noted we might learn something about the migration of our so-called resident birds.

2. That a particular wind has to blow is to be appreciated when we realise that mist can form only when a particular wind blows at a particular time of day at a particular time of the year. Simple meteorological issues are involved.

3. Birds will dash against the lights only when there is mist because this is when the lights are defused to resemble a glow of dawn or a moon lit sky and the feather brained creatures get befooled. I would like to invite my friends to try crossing a high Himalayan pass in dense mist. The experience is a revelation.

4. It has been known for long that on foggy nights migratory song birds do get mixed up around light houses in temperate countries and many have been reported coming to grief against the glass panes of the light houses.

5. In Saurashtra at Hingolghadh, we have had a floriken fly into the lighted house. Bird books report of Emerald Doves dashing against white washed walls of forest bungalows going at the lick they - and incidently the three toed kingfishers, do, is it surprising if they find their error too late to rectify.

White storks in Vellore by S.Theodore Baskaran:

I was fascinated by the note on the White storks, by A.C. Karat and others, in the Newsletter of March-April. And with good reason...it was in the same area that I saw white storks nearly a decade back, when I used to live in Vellore.

In April, 1970, I was going in a motor-cycle with a friend, on the Arni road. Just before the T B Sanatorium, about 3 km from the spot where our friends had seen the birds recently, we saw two white storks on a dried up lake bed, to the right of the road. They appeared quite at home there and were walking about in measured pace. Excited by the sighting, I wrote a note on the observation which was published in the HINDU of 7.7.70 (Weekly magazine).

In 1976, I saw a pair near Gummidipoondi, in November. A Tamil poem, from circa 6-7th century AD, by Sathimutra Pulavar, gives an accurate description of the white stork and talks about a pair flying from Cape Comorin, towards the north.

Book Review by Mrs. Laeeg Futhelly:

The Pictorial Encyclopedia of Birds by J. Hanzak.

Translated by Olga Kuthanova. Edited by Bruce Campbell
Hamlyn £ 2.95. 580pp

There are several unusual things about this book. The name of the author sounds like a Czech name, the text has been translated into English (from the Czech language?) and certainly the book has been printed in Czechoslovakia. It is scientific and precise and more than normally pictorial; in that nine tenth of the page-space is taken up by photographs, excellent ones. It was first printed in 1967 and has been reprinted every other year. The paper and production are first-rate; in bulk and weight the book must be over two kilos, and the price works out at Rs.54.30. Where can you get better value?

'Of necessity', says Bruce Campbell, 'photographs of stuffed specimen or of birds in captivity have been used for a few species, but the photographic resources of the world have been scoured for studies of species in the wild, and the Encyclopedia is notable for the number of pictures of birds from the Eastern parts of the great Eurasian landmass. No species is mentioned in the text without a supporting photograph....'

This vast amount of material has been organized in a practical and lucid manner. Without any sectional or chapter divisions you go straight through the 27 Orders, with short succinct general descriptions of each species and its distribution.

The photographs have no captions, only numbers. The text itself is a kind of extended caption, and the mention of a species - in bold type - is always followed by a number corresponding to the number on the photograph. The editors must be good at putting jigjaw puzzles together for they have managed to so arrange things that the relevant photo is on the same page, - in fact usually next to- the description of the bird. So that if you want to look up a bird, you look up the index which gives you the page number: and here you find both the photo of your bird as well that part of the text which describes it.

The appearance of the book is continuous and flowing, it does not have the severe look of the conventional dictionary or encyclopedia because it is not broken up into headings.

An admirable introduction puts the reader in possession of the basic facts of ornithology - including those areas of doubt or disagreement. - beginning with the evolution of avian life and ending with their conservation. We can only repeat that, one way and another, its very good value.

Editor : Zafar Futehally

Dodda Gubbi Post, Via Vidyanagar, Bangalore - 562134

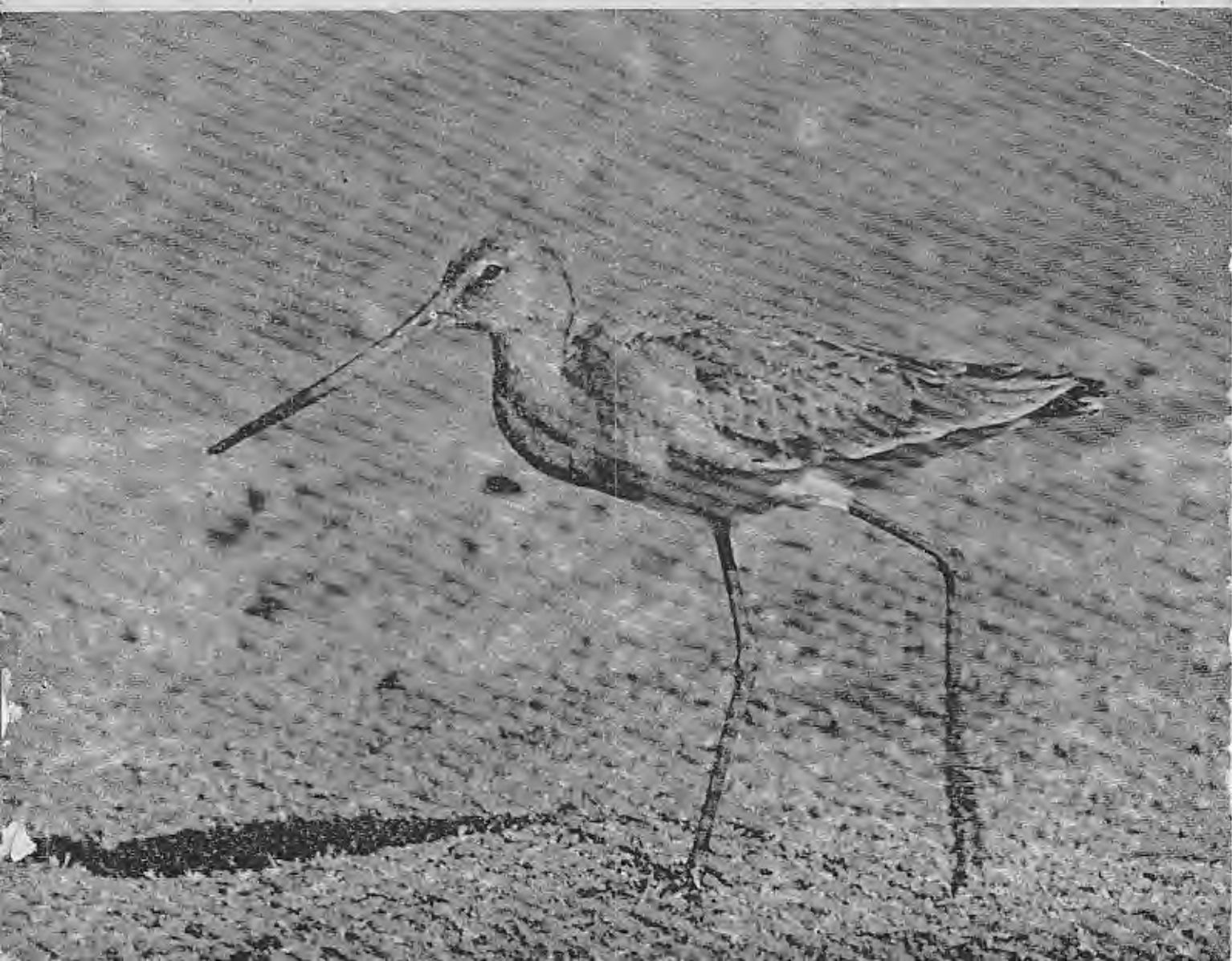
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Cover Picture : Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Photo by : E. Hanumantha Rao

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXI NO. 6 JUNE, 1981



NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

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Editorial

From my diary. Andheri, Bombay: 16.6.68: I heard the calls of a Drongo Cuckoo, the ascending seven notes which I do not recall hearing in our garden before. Stuart Baker says in his Fauna Volume IV that the genus *SURNICULUS* is remarkable for its extraordinary resemblance, both in structure and colouration to the common Black Drongo. If I had the collectors mania, which I am fortunate in not possessing, I would take the three eggs in the nest of the Black Drongo to check if any of them belonged to *SURNICULUS LUGUBRIS* [The interesting feature of this bird, apart from its call is that though in general appearance it is so like the Black Drongo its 'flight is cuckoo like and noticeably different from drongos']

18.6.68: Early morning today a Pond Heron, in breeding plumage (but without orange red legs) came on our Rayan tree and started to tug at a twig obviously for nesting material. It was a quaint performance, and evoked memories of sights seen in gymnasia where seekers of health perched precariously on double bars stretch out in various directions. Even when reaching for a twig the bird stretched out slowly in the same way that it does when aiming at its prey and had great difficulty in finally taking it away. It made four trips for the same purpose.

22.6.68: In the evening I was privileged to see the comic and pompous courtship of spotted Munias. I think Malcolm Macdonald has described this in his 'Birds in a Delhi Garden' and what I saw brought back to mind what he wrote. The female and the male were both tugging away at branchlets of a 'VILAITEE IMLI' tree. I am surprised that birds go to the trouble of breaking green twigs from trees when so much material is lying on the ground for the asking. But presumably green twigs are stronger and more lasting than dry stuff. The birds certainly had to strain a lot in tearing away what they wanted. They swing down almost half circle from their perches and put all their strength in the attempt. After a while the female perched alongside the male, bent forward and started shivering her tail, so compellingly that in a few seconds the male succumbed to the invitation. But before doing so, he started to dance sideways, shifting his balance from one leg to the other like a maestro on the dance floor.

=====

Visit to Idukki: On the 29th and 30th May, I was in MOOLAMATTOM, 55 miles east of Cochin below the Idukki dam. A visit to Kerala is startling every time. Though the natural forests have disappeared, the capacity of the people to make good use of every inch of ground is amazing. Jackfruit, Banana, Coconut, Tapioca, Cocoa, Pepper and many more plants survive shoulder to shoulder. The fact that there is so much food around is probably the reason why they can afford to go on strike for months at a time. At Moolamattom now an environment of coconut and bananas. I did not expect to see too many birds, but around our rest house there were plenty of Redwhiskered Bulbuls, a few Redvented Bulbuls, Whitebreasted Kingfisher, Golden backed Woodpecker, Crow Pheasants, courting, Bluewinged Parakeets, Jungle Bobblers, Lotens Sunbirds and several others. The artificial lake with a water spread of 23 sq miles has not yet attracted any birds. We saw only 2 Darters in the water, and since Darters live on fish, there must be fish in the lake and this should attract other birds in course of time.

=====

'Dudhwa - A Bird-watchers Paradise' by S.F. Hague,
U.P. Warehousing Corporation, P.O. Gadarpur, Dist.Nainital
U.P. Pin-263152.

'Dudhwa National Park, which holds eleventh position in the national list of the 'National Parks' in India is spread over an area of approximately 495 sq.kms. on the Indo-Nepal border in Lakshmipur-Kheri district of Uttar Pradesh. Declared a National Park in February 1977, Dudhwa is largely scrub jungle liberally interspersed with a large variety of shrubs and trees. It is famous for deer families, particularly for Swamp deer. Besides the deer species, tigers, leopards, elephants and a good number of bird species are also well represented in this park. So far we have listed about 195 species of birds in this park, which include several aquatic and exotic species which visit it in a particular season. Our check-list is not complete and a few more bird-species are yet to be listed. Since the ecology of Dudhwa is swampy with deciduous forest, the insect population in the park is also much larger than expected: consequently the population of insect-eating birds viz. Bee-eaters Drongos, Mynas Flycatchers, Wagtails, etc. are well represented here. There can be seen many a Paradise Flycatcher (Terpsiphone paradisi), my favourite bird, flying and looping their

beautiful long tail in the air just on and near the bank of the Suhaeili river.

Among water-birds Pelicans, Darters, Cormorants, Herons, Egrets, Storks, Ibises, Spoon bill, Ducks, Geese, Coots can be seen in flocks of hundreds in Bankey and Kakraha, the two tals (ponds) situated deep in the forest, away from every sort of disturbance.

If park officials manage to provide more perching facilities for birds near water-pockets, I think the number of birds might increase.

The best season to watch and study birdlife in Dudhwa is from November to April every year.

Extract from a letter by Maninder Singh, M-16, Greater Kailash II, New Delhi 48, to his mentor Lav Kumar Khacher:
I have managed to reach my '50' on my checklist. The BNHS checklist for the region(Delhi) catalogues 450 or so. While Usha Ganguli has crossed over 300, I have set as my target, Alexander O. Humes' 87, in his 'Birds in my Indian Garden', and would be delighted if I could reach it in another two years.

My checklist is a separate file, with serial number, latin name, common name, jotted down in chronological order of identification along with a brief note, giving the date, place, and time when the bird was identified.

Identification itself involves jotting down plumage and size details in my field notes, coming back, and delving into my 'Salim Ali' and Usha Ganguli while the memory is green, and finally, copying down my field notes as well as the 'field identification' guidelines given in the reference volumes. Then I compare the characteristics observed to those recorded, and finally give my own verdict on whether the identification is to my satisfaction. If it is sufficiently positive, another jubilant entry is made in the 'checklist' file.

Your one line about Peregrines did much to raise my joy at reading your card. Dreams have a strange way of coming true-after in the most casual, unexpected fashion.

I have also had the opportunity to encounter another gem of a nature writer, Hal Borland, an American, whose 'nature editorials' in the New York Times were a regular feature of the paper for seven years. Out of the over 1,900 pieces, he selected 365 before his death, which were published in book form: 'Twelve months of the year: The marvellous datewise record of nature's stream splashing through the year - slowing, weary in winter, cascading and rippling in spring, racing in the American summer and eddying hesitantly in Autumn makes absorbing reading'.

I have found the more I probe deeply into birds, the more fascinating their world becomes, and the pleasure of unravelling, tiny bit by excruciatingly tiny bit, the complex parts of their life, is a task that yields endless pleasure. Of course, most observations are initial and explanations often erroneous, but that only increases the joy at finding my observations and notes about bird flight are admirably confirmed by Salim Ali, and an obscure quirk of bird behaviour in 'the Peregrine' is vividly portrayed before my eyes.

Perhaps the most fascinating - and being so large, the easiest to study is the kite. Gradually, his endless meanderings begin to make a little sense - and each wing-beat and loop show a little of the shadows changing through the convulsions of an avian mind. Often, gazing at their smooth, lyrical movements makes my heart move with a strange joy that only a fellow bird watcher can understand. I know, now, a little bit, of what Baker means in his book.

At times I feel that perhaps reading about gliding would help to understand much about a kite's life - and one of the projects I keep in a corner of my mind for a distant future, is to go up in a glider myself, and to see the world through the Kite's vantage, and become myself, a part of the racing winds, and rise, corkscrewing, through those mysterious thermals, to a higher world.

Another item, one which you can perhaps help me about, is to read a good book on avian anatomy - and if possible, even dissect a bird, I am not enough of a romantic to put love for birds above scientific necessity, and I firmly feel that seeing, with my own eyes, the actual location and **shape** of feathers and muscles, on a corpse would help in my understanding of a birds body - and hence flight, and life.

One thing I have learnt is it is wrong to sentimentalise about nature as an end unto itself. To appreciate beauty should not drown the need for a cold, even ruthless, appraisal of facts.

Which is why my nature diary has two types of entries - kept carefully separate. One a dry, unadorned, statement of facts and observations, as objectively as possible - this is followed by an attempt at explanation with all the possible alternatives I can think of being jotted down, and then ruled out or favoured on the basis of systematically arranged arguments, ending with either a question mark, or a declared preference for either alternative. I have been unable yet to find out the significance of most observations, but in the mass of data, there might some day appear an unfamiliar, unknown observation - the sort every ornithologist dreams of!

The second is an entirely descriptive effort, trying to capture not so much what was there to be seen, but what was seen, - and inextricably linking the observer with the observation - my emotions and responses, coming out in great strength. It is extracts from these that I have been sending you.

Of course, the differences are only superficial - without the emotional motivation, bird watching would be dry, indeed - and an unattractive pursuit or for that matter without an attempt to gauge, carefully, and systematically what is happening, descriptive writing would have little to describe. Yet, the distinction remains necessary. Missing them would render both meaningless.

I am also beginning a separate ring-file, with a separate page and series of pages for each bird, with notes on distribution plumage, behaviour nesting.

The whole thing is getting most pleasurably thick!

'Bird Suicides in the North Sea by V.Santharam:

Gas flares over the North Sea oil rigs are visible over long distances against the completely dark background of the winter. The Natural Gases from oil rigs cannot be exploited fully and therefore have to be burnt off some 40 to 80 meters above the sea level. Migratory birds going to their winter homes in warmer climates are attracted to these flares, as moths to a flame, and are roasted alive. During September and October the tolls are the highest particularly during foggy weather.

British Ornithologist Bryan Sage who managed to get some information regarding the bird deaths says the first accident occurred in 1973. The oil companies have refused journalists access to oil rigs to study the phenomenon, yet one Norwegian journal was able to get some information from two offshore workers that starlings and thrushes were among the maximum killed. Sage says that according to some workers on the rig, in the night of 25-26 October 1977, 1500 dead birds were counted on the platform of an oil rig. But since many roasted birds would have fallen directly into the sea, the toll may have been as high as 3,000 at that spot. The exhausted birds literally catch fire and plummet into the sea, forming small smoke clouds as they hit the water.

Most oil companies ignore the problem totally and protests have not been able to move them. Only British Petroleum seems to be willing to let an Ornithologist study the problem. Protective measures can be taken only if one knows details involved.

Vedanthangal: May I inform our readers that this year, the Vedanthangal bird sanctuary is dry as there were no rains there this season. Usually it rains here in October-December. Although Madras city had good rains, Chingelput district did not have the usual rains and as a consequence drought conditions prevail here. I have been going to Vedanthangal every month since August but till my last visit in last week of November, there was no water there. The Forest Department announced that there was no water even in mid-December. Even at Karilekili sanctuary, nearby, there is no water. Though some waterbirds are seen around, there is no sign of nesting. Ducks are also seen circulating the tanks as in the case of other water birds and flying away. The Forester at Vedanthangal is happy, as he believes the drought would give a chance to

the *Acacia arabica*, which been planted in the lake on a large scale, to come up and provide more nesting place for the birds in future.

Comments: The editor had suggested that the thrush I had seen in Madras could be *Zoothera citrina cyanotus* as the range of this race includes Madras. But I am pretty certain that it is the *Z.C. Citrina* that I had seen (as mentioned in the note - March-April, 1981 issue) as I am familiar with the former race, having seen it in Cochin some time back. The bird I had seen in Madras clearly lacked the white throat and white sides of the head banded vertically with black which is characteristic of the race *cyanotus* (white throated ground thrush) but had a uniform orange head, throat and underparts. Also Dr. Salim Ali mentions that the race *citrina* spreads out in winter mainly over Northern India and down to Ceylon. Perhaps the bird seen in Madras was a passage migrant.

Mr. Indra Kumar Sharma is not right in saying that Blue rock pigeons, house sparrows and roseringed parakeets are uncommon in Madras, Trivandrum and other South Indian cities (February, 1981 issue). Also I disagree with his observation that birds are often absent in South India because the humans do not look on them with a friendly eye and that these birds (mentioned above) are present in Marwari localities only as they feed the birds. All the three above-mentioned species are quite common in Madras even in the busiest parts of the city like the Central Station area and Parry's Corner. Apart from these, one can easily spot even in the busiest localities, species such as House swift which nest in the High court buildings and other older buildings, common swallows, mynas, Kites, Bulbuls, Pond herons and many other species. Moreover, the South Indians are not as unfriendly towards birds as Mr. Sharma suggests. One can, to this day, see Night Herons nesting in the busy localities of Madras, and also notice hundreds of egrets moving into the city after dusk to roost. Vedanthangal would not have been a bird sanctuary but for the protection given by the local villagers. Like the Marwaris, many South Indian communities have the habit of feeding crows before their meals. The statement that the scrub jungles in South India do not support species like Doves, Bulbuls, Babblers etc and that the tanks do not attract birds like stilt, sandpiper etc is not true. Mr. Sharma has been, obviously, misinformed about birds in South India and has come to conclusions without substantial field observations.

Regarding White storks, I was told by Mr. Bill Harvey and one or two others that these birds had been sighted near Mahabalipuram this winter.

A Bird count in a woodland in Ludhiana (Punjab) by A.K.Chakravarthy, 509 Sri.Lakshmi Nilayam, II Stage Rajajinagar, Bangalore -560055: In March, 1980, Mr.Govindakrishnan and Mr.Ananda Rao, Dr.Naidu and Mr. Sandhu and Dr.Manjit and I counted birds in a woodland (=1ha) consisting of tall trees of Dalbergia sissoo and medium sized trees of the species of silver oak, Eucalyptus, Plumaria and Neerium. The predominant weeds were of the species of Chenopodium and Lantana. The woodland had densely - and sparsely vegetated areas. The densely wooded portion had tall and medium trees as well as good weed population. In sparsely wooded portion, weed population was low and trees had not picked-up good height. The woodland was surveyed for birds by: (1) Line transect (count along a straight line) (2) Criss-cross transect (count along a 'Z' shaped line) (3) Spot-watch (count from 3 spots - 1, 2 and 3).

Each time the bird species and numbers were noted through a pair of 8 x 30 binoculars. About 15 minutes were spent for each method of count. No two persons counted birds by more than one method.

Densely vegetated area recorded more birds than sparsely vegetated area and interestingly all three methods of count were required to detect maximum, i.e. 20 species (see Table 1).

Table 1: Bird species and numbers in the Woodland

Common name of birds	Line transect		Criss-cross transect		Spot-Watch		
	DV *	SV **	DV	SV	DV Spot1	DV+SV Spot2	SV Spot3
Red Breasted Flycatcher(1)	+	+	+	+	-	+	-
Black Drongo(4)	+	+	+	-	+	-	+
Green Bee-eater(3)	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
Ring Dove(7)	+	-	+	-	-	+	-
Redstart(2)	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
Common Myna(2)	+	-	+	-	-	-	-
Large Grey Babbler(7)	+	-	+	+	-	-	-
Coppersmith(1)	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Purple Sunbird(2)	+	+	+	+	+	+	-
Little Brown Dove(3)	+	+	-	-	-	-	-
Tree Pie(2)	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Red Vented Bulbul(5)	+	+	+	-	-	+	-
Golden Oriole(2)	+	-	+	-	-	+	+
Pariah Kite(1)	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pied Myna(3)	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ioel(2)	+	-	-	-	+	-	-
Indian Robin(4)	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Ashy Wren-Warbler(2)	-	-	+	-	-	-	-
Kestrel(1)	-	-	-	-	+	-	-
White-breasted Kingfisher(1)	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
No. of species detected	16	77	11	3	5	6	2

Figures in brackets indicate the numbers of birds in the Woodland.

* Densely vegetated area

** Sparsely vegetated area

+ Present

- Absent

Lesser Grey Shrike (Lanius minor) off Sukhna Lake by
A.K.Chakravathy, P.S. Sandhu and P.K. Ananda Rao,
509, Sri Lakshmi Nilayam, II Stage, Rajajinagar, Bangalore 55:
 On 2nd February 1980 over a stub in a Acacia patch a bird was sighted through a pair of 8x30 binoculars. Our previous field experience indicated the bird: smaller size, short tail and less white on wings, not to be a Grey Shrike - a species quite commonly seen particularly during winter in and around wooded areas in Punjab. Being an unusual species, the bird was watched for more than an hour and detailed notes on it were recorded in the field briefly, the bird was distinctly smaller than the Grey Shrike; forehead black; head grey; chin bright white; greyish blue upperparts; at rest, readily visible were 5, white (roughly 'V' shaped) bands intercepting black wing tips; white underparts with greyish tinge at sides; tail short; legs black; a thick black band across eyes; call sounded like Treeew..... Treeew.... Treeew, uttered feebly while on perch; preferred to perch on stubs just above ground over stubs at greater heights; foraged on surface prey and picked-up insects (e.g. grasshopper, cricket) frequently from the same perch; approachable from about 3 meters; only a single individual was sighted in the batch which repeatedly fanned out wing feathers. Back to library the following day, the 'Handbook of.....' was consulted. Field observations paralleled the most with Lesser Grey Shrike (LGS). The status of LGS is not well established. This, perhaps, prompted Mr. Reeves and Mr. Lav Kumar Khachar (Newsletter XXI, No.2) to enquire into the identity of the bird.

In Punjab, species of the Genera - Cesthia (tree-Creepers), Anthus (pipits), Turdus (Thrushes) and Phylloscopus (Leaf-warblers) have been the most difficult to identify in field. Indeed, very interesting species have been sighted in surveys, details of which are pending publication.

Gulls in Mysore by K.Ullas Karanth, Mewa Singh, Rajgopal,
Mysore: Members of our Environmental Protection Group, Mysore have been conducting a bird survey around Mysore. During the course of this, we came across Brownheaded Gulls (Larus brunnicephalus) in a large tank, on the south-western outskirts of Mysore city. We have observed them often from March 8th to date. Their numbers have been varying from 2 to 15. Some of them were in their 'brown headed' summer plumage and the others in the winter plumage. We have made the identification positively after close observations revealed characteristic features like the 'mirrored wings'

and red bill and feet.

The other birds found in the same tank were: the River Tern; Gullbilled Tern; and other common water birds like Storks, Egrets, Herons, Ducks, Teals, Sandpipers, Stilts, Lapwings etc. of different species.

Since the above sighting record of Gulls so far in land appears to be a rare event, we request you to publish it in the Newsletter.

Chestnut Headed Bee-eater by Shilov Iman, Hazaribagh, Bihar: On the afternoon of the March 16th I was drawn outside by the sound of a bird which I could not remember ever having heard before; a rather loud, 'stswée, stswée, stswée, stswée'. On locating its source imagine my delight to find a bird which I had never previously seen. High above me, making a very colourful sight on a bare branch of a Rusty Shieldbearer, was a Chestnut-headed Bee-eater (*Merops Leschenaulti*). Its most noticable features were a bright yellow throat terminating in a dark band, a chestnut coloured head, and the absence of any central and projecting tail pins.

The same evening I encountered a pair sitting in a young Sal tree, at a distance of about 150 yards from the first sighting, and again at the same place the following morning; that time there being three of them

I had never before come across a Chestnut-headed Bee-eater in Hazaribagh, although there are many small green Bee-eaters (*Merops Orientalis*), these also sometimes without tail pins, nor have I seen any since.

I live fairly close to a badly denuded forest area so that those who are more knowledgeable can perhaps assess the likelihood of them still being in the area. Such an attractive bird, once seen, can surely not easily be forgotten, but to see it again would be almost as thrilling as the first occasion.

White Storks on Migration by S.N. Varu, Junawas, Pipla Street, Madhapar (Kutch-Bhui) 370020: Reference to Note in the March-April 1981 issue of the Newsletter by A.C. Kart, R.P. Haran and John P. Selvan - page 11.

Migration of White stork (*Ciconia Ciconia*) can easily be seen in August, September in Kutch.

I observed 40 to 50 White storks on 13.9.80 at a shallow brackish water pond. Between Loria - Bhirandiyara (Banni) I again visited this place on 21.9.80 and found that the number of White storks had not decreased. About 30 species of Migratory Birds were also seen during these two visits.

Status of the Blacknaped Monarch Flycatcher in Saurashtra (Monarcha Azurea Styani): Reference to note in the May, 81 issue of the Newsletter by Dr.B.M.Parashmya on page 11.

I have also seen this bird at Kileshwar (Barda Hills) on 25.1.81 and 26.1.81. It was seen catching winged insects near a Mango tree on the bank of a stream. On my visit to Gir Forest I saw a single bird on 1.3.81 at Kankai.

Decrease in Bird Population of Nainital by Bipin Chandra Pande, Oak Cottage, Nainital, U.P.: In the issue of June/July, 1980 I read the letter of Akshoba Singjee stating that there are a lot of birds in Nainital. I think Mr.Singh had misunderstood my letter because from a long time back a lot of changes in the environment have taken place due to which a lot of bird species have diminished.

In the issue of April, the Editor had just given a summary of my article, in which I had given a detailed account of the birds of Nainital. Mr.Singh had written in the June-July issue that in the morning time you could see 20-30 different variety of birds. But if you observe minutely in the municipal board area or in the surroundings of Nainital, you can see a lot more than Mr.Singhs' list.

Plaintive Cuckoo in Sparrows' nest by D. Sidhartha,
34/A, Santoshnagar Colony, Hyderabad 500659: The Indian
 Plaintive Cuckoo is a parasitic bird. It usually lays
 its eggs in the nest of Ashy wren warblers.

Behind my house there are a few Pomegranate trees. I see a lot of Sparrows on these trees. I remember that twice last year, I saw a strange phenomenon. A female sparrow was seen to be feeding an over sized plaintive cuckoo. The cuckoo chick with its brightly coloured gaping mouth and wings flapping slightly, looked very comical. The female sparrow was obviously a 'foster parent' of that cuckoo. A female plaintive cuckoo had accidentally or intentionally laid its egg in the nest of a common sparrow.

Correspondence

Bird watching at Bhatinda (Punjab) by Dinesh Sikand, C/o
HQ CWE(P), Bhatinda 151004, Punjab: In January we spotted a winter visitor, 'Blue Throat' (*Erithacus Svecicus*) in our kitchen garden. This bird was a male with a white patch in the middle surrounded by blue. It was quite active and looked like a robin with a distinct whitish eye brow. It is still here in March and is presumably a visitor from N. Europe.

Another bird which is very noticable towards the evening is the black winged Kite. One bird in particular has been spotted on an electric line near a canal regularly looking for a prey. Recently I had the opportunity to see it parachuting down gradually with vertically raised motionless wings and suddenly pouncing on a mouse in our kitchen garden and then deftly flying away with it in its claws to a TV antenna.

In Bhatinda which is a predominantly arid and semi-dry region three type of shrikes i.e. Grey, Rufous backed and Bay backed are commonly seen. Large cuckoo shrikes have also been spotted near the freshly cultivated fields.

Red vented Bulbuls are in plenty, and a white cheeked Bulbul sits everyday on a thorny and dry bush to sing its song. Pairs of Rose ringed parakeets keep chattering away the whole day and keep eating the marigold flowers to their heart's content.

Other birds seen here are Red wattled lapwing, Hoopoe, Pied Wagtail, Babblers (Common, and Large Grey) pied bush Chat, Collared bush chat, Indian Wren warbler in its winter plumage with long tail, Red starts, Crested skylark, Indian Robin, Black Drongos and others.

Small green bee eaters which were not seen in winter, have suddenly reappeared in large numbers.

Orange headed North Indian Citrina observed for the first time in Bhubaneswar by Hari Prasad Patnaik, Department of Entomology, College of Agriculture, Bhubaneswar-751003, Orissa: On 3rd March, 81 at 8.15 am my attention was drawn to a bird perching on a small branch of a mango plant. I had never seen such a bird earlier in Bhubaneswar. However this bird had similarities with the white throated Ground Thrush, Zoothera citrina (Latham) as described by Salim Ali (The Book of Indian Birds, pp 112, Fig.224), but differed in some respects. The birds head, neck, throat, sides of the head and underparts were yellowish brown without any markings. The colour of the abdomen and the tail coverts was dull white. The upper parts and wings were slaty blue with a small bluish white patch on winglets. This could be the orange-headed North Indian Citrina, a race that is known to breed along the Himalayas which spread out in winter over Northern India and down to Sri Lanka (Ali, 1977-The Book of Indian Birds pp 112). But still I require verification in respect of its identity from the readers of your Newsletter.

Early nesting by Crows: On 22nd February, 1981 I visited the Dhakuria Lake, Calcutta. While moving round the scenic lake I happened to observe a small island where more than hundred cormorants were perching on a dead tree, that looked white (probably due to the bird excreta). Besides, at the boat club house adjacent to the lake, I was able to record a few drongos, a pair of golden backed wood peckers, koels, black headed orioles and others.

But one thing appeared to be interesting: almost every crow was busy with building its nest. My feeling in this regard was that the crows of this area were probably a bit earlier in building their nests as compared to their normal nesting season which is from April to June.

Bird watching in Garo Hills, Meghalaya by Dr. Sas. Biswas, Burnihat, Assam: During an excursion in Garo Hills (Meghalaya) from 15th June 1979 to 22nd June 1979, I made certain observations on the birds. Since the duration of the excursion was brief, the list of birds produced below is far from complete.

Garo Hills are bounded on the North and West by the district Goalpara (Assam), in the South by the district of Mymensing (Bangla Desh) and on the East by the district Khasi hills (Meghalaya). It lies between $25^{\circ}9'$ and $26^{\circ}1'N$ and $89^{\circ}49'$ and $91^{\circ}2'E$ and covers an area of 3140 sq. miles. Most of the hills are covered with dense tropical forest and much of this forest still remains less biotically disturbed. The region is drained by 5 rivers namely, Someswari, Krishni, Bhugai, Nitai and Kalu. The rainfall ranges between 100-130". Heavy precipitation in summer keeps down the temperature at $26^{\circ} + 3^{\circ}C$.

The following birds were observed during the excursion. The localities visited are Rongrengiri, William Nagar and Vicinity of Tura. Their identification is based on Dr. Salim Ali's book on Indian Birds (1972) and Birds of Eastern Himalaya (1977). 1) Black headed bulbul 2) Red-vented bulbul 3) Spotted dove 4) Jungle crow 5) House sparrow 6) Tailor bird 7) Indian Myna 8) Hill Myna 9) Black headed Oriole 10) Red wattled Lapwing 11) Imperial pigeon 12) Common green pigeon 13) Barbet (blue throated) 14) Large green barbet 15) Night jar 16) Spotted Owlet 17) Slaty headed Parakeet 18) Palm swift 19) White breasted kingfisher 20) Crow pheasant 21) Shikra 22) Blue jay or Roller 23) Shahin Falcon 24) Black drongo 25) Purple rumped sunbird 26) Magpie Robin 27) Cattle Egret 28) Scarlet minivet 29) Blue tailed Bee-eater 30) Golden backed wood-pecker 31) Yellow fronted pied or Mahratta wood pecker 32) Rock pigeon 33) Tree pie.

Crows enjoy poultry chicks by D.B. Pawar, Department of Entomology, MPKV Rahuri-413722: The crow is a carnivorous as well as omnivorous bird. I observed that it feeds on poultry eggs, but not on the chickens. Suddenly on 11th March 1981, I came across a surprising sight. I have always allowed my poultry to wander freely in my compound. There has never been any danger to them before. But on 11th March a crow sitting on a tree captured one chick. I rushed towards it with a stone in my hand, but it flew

away with the chick. The next day the same thing happened. So now I keep the chicks in a cage.

Book Review by Mrs. Laeeq Futhelly:

Birds of Prey of the World by Friedhelm Weick: In Collaboration with Leslie H Brown ~~Verlag Paul Parey, Hamburg and Berlin~~

Armed with this book, one ought to be able to identify, swiftly and painlessly, any bird of prey - except owls - in any part of the World, and in any kind of plumage - juvenile, immature, male or female.

Every single species has been painted in its various plumage-phases, in profile. There are 40 full - page plates, some of them showing as many as 30 illustrations of falconidae all in identical side-positions. Opposite each plate is a table giving the distribution of each species, plus accurate measurements of the wing, tail, tarsus and the total length and weight of the bird. This table also describes the distribution pattern of the races, and often gives extra information about it. Indeed, despite its Coffee table appearance this is a book for the professional ornithologist rather than the casual birder. Its usefulness to scientists is increased by the twin texts in German and English which are printed side by side.

The first section of the book consists of several keys for identification by size, colour and shape of head, bill, and claws. A second section describes the main characteristics of each genus and sub-family, with beautiful drawings of the characteristic head, bill and sometimes tarsus of each group.

The author is both the artist and writer. Fired by Sir Peter Scotts 'Wildfowl of the World', he determined to do a similar service for the birds of prey. We are told by Leslie Brown in his Introduction that he laboured for 10 years at his task. And, examining the result, we are surprised that he managed to complete it in that time. 'He has also been to special trouble - to ensure accuracy in the colour of the eyes, cere and legs - So often among the first characters to strike an observer, but often inaccurately described in Guides, and even in handbooks, because the original collector did not correctly describe them when preparing his specimen'.

Indeed the accuracy and the painstaking attention to detail, is evident on every page of the book, whether in the text, tables, keys, drawings or illustrations. This book is obviously, as Leslie Brown says, a labour of love and we join him in hoping that the author will be rewarded with a deserved success, and will 'find that love sometimes pays dividends'.

By Jasper Newsome, Norton House, Rug BM, Warwickshire, UK:
By the way in Bombay I checked all the Babblers in both Hand Book and the Collection and found nothing like the bird I reported from Almora. I know it from nowhere else but it is common there.

ERRATA

In the January, 1981 Newsletter there were two typing errors in the article. On page 5 by A.K.Chakravathy there should have been a '?' after Lerser Grey Shrike, which is missing. Also Chestnutbellied.... has been typed as Chestnutheaded.



Editor: Zafar Futehally

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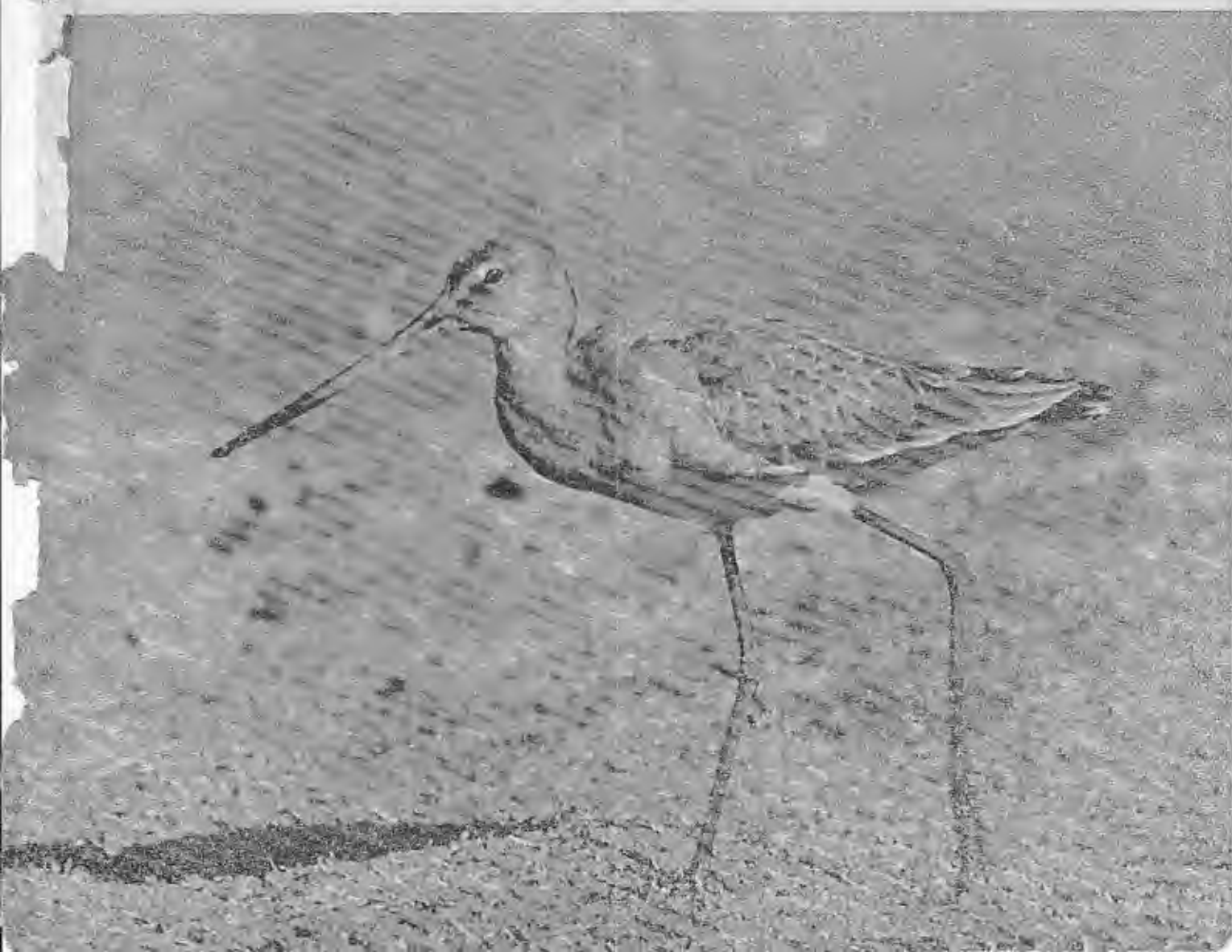
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Cover Picture: Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Photo by: E. Hanumantha Rao

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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Editorial

Another K.K. Surendran prize for birdwatching at night:
Mr. K.K. Surendran has offered a fresh prize of Rs.100/- for the best article published in the Newsletter during 1981 on this subject. Owls, nightjars, and night herons are some of the birds which could be observed.

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Red Data Book by Christoph Imboden of the International Council for Bird Preservation: We all know now that protection of habitat is the key to the protection of species. Thus, conservation activities are increasingly directed towards projects dealing with whole habitats, ecosystems or entire geographical regions. In shifting the emphasis away from species, however, we must ensure that the problem of the individual endangered species is not pushed too much into the background. There are good reasons why species oriented projects should be pursued as readily as habitat projects.

Many vertebrates, especially birds, are excellent indicators of the status of our environment. In many instances man has, in fact, become aware of fundamental environmental problems (e.g. pesticide contamination) through the study of a declining bird population. Equally, it is through the implementation of a conservation project for an individual species that many fine habitats have become reserves that are not only of benefit to the particular species but to a whole community of plants and animals (e.g. Tiger reserves in India). Species and habitats are of course inseparable. However, those who are raising the enormous funds required for conservation have learnt that the plight of individual species is still the best way of attracting people's attention and increasing their awareness of the need for conservation.

For this reason we must continue to give great importance to the monitoring of species and the initiation of projects on rare and endangered forms. The compilation of the Red Data Book is, and will remain, a high priority task for ICBP. It is therefore with satisfaction that we can report on two important developments in this respect during the past two months.

Early in May the Smithsonian Institution Press published a paperback version of the Bird Red Data under the title Endangered Birds of the World. The book was compiled by Warren King on behalf of ICBP and IUCN, and first published in a rather expensive loose leaf form two years ago. The new low-cost edition will, we hope, greatly increase the circulation of this important document and stimulate the reporting of up-to-date information.

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Nesting of Caspian Terns: *Ornis Fennica* is published quarterly by the Finnish Ornithological Society. Volume 56, No.4 of 1980 contains an article by Goran Bergman on Single Breeding versus Colonial Breeding in the Caspian Tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*), the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and the Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*). The discussion is of some interest from our point of view, for we have several species of herons, for example, which breed in colonies, but which occasionally breed individually or not with their conspecifics but with members of the same family.

'Caspian Terns prefer small, low, flat, rocky or gravel islets without trees or bushes in most cases less than two hectares in area situated in a physiographically marine landscape'. Apparently, the first Caspian Terns arriving in the Baltic were single pairs. Not finding colonies of their own species they integrated with colonies of other larids (Gulls and Terns). The advantage of breeding in, or close to, a colony of other birds is that they can 'utilise the reactions of other birds for information on the situation in the surroundings and the shelter offered by the colony against predators'.

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New Breeding Grounds for Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus roseus*): Ever since Flamingos were discovered nesting in the Rann of Kutch it was believed that there was no other nesting ground of the birds in India, and perhaps this was so all along. But now the birds appear to have decided that it is not good policy to have all their eggs in one basket. Mr. P.S. Thakker has recently discovered a new breeding ground in the Thol Lake which is 30 km from Ahmedabad. According to him there were over 5000 Flamingos together with other water birds. They discovered about 70 nests of Flamingos, and young birds were also present. This

exciting news was telecast by Door Darshan on 21st June. Mr. Thakker and his friends will undoubtedly keep a close watch on this new Flamingo colony and future reports will be awaited with great interest.

=====

Studies in the Thar Desert: Indra Kumar Sharma continues his energetic studies in the Thar Desert and has collected valuable information on the vegetation and animal life. He has attempted to list bird species according to the habitat. This is difficult business for one kind of habitat merges into the other, and where does one draw the line. However, this is what Sharma reports:

Sandy Scrub: Little dove, ring dove, spotted owl, white cheeked bulbul, red vented bulbul, common babbler, grey shrike, purple sunbirds, green bee-eater, black-bellied finchlark, Indian robin, Indian wren warbler, great Indian bustard, grey partridge, white throated munia, pied chat, desert chat, ashy wren warbler, black-winged kite, and houbara bustard.

Rocky Biotope: Doves, babblers, bulbuls and swallows are listed, but without an indication of the species this is pointless. The other birds in this Biotope are: Grey partridge, Indian robin, grey shrike, house swift, black bellied finchlark, white throated munia, yellow throated sparrow, spotted owl, green bee-eater, Indian wren warbler, rufoustailed finchlark, Indian night jar, common sandgrouse, and imperial sandgrouse.

Rain Pools and Lakes: Little ringed plover, redwattled lapwing, Indian moorhen, purple moorhen, spotted sand piper, common sand piper, spoon bill, white ibis, little cormorant, painted stork, saras crane, bar headed goose, comb duck, white eyed pochard, pintail, blue-winged teal, gadwal tufted pochard and blackwinged stilt.

Agricultural Farms: Blue-rock pigeon, house sparrow, house crow, jungle crow, jungle babbler, common babbler, white-backed vulture, scavenger vulture, rose-ringed parakeet, green bee-eater, crimson breasted barbet, great horned owl, rosy pastor, peafowl. Mynas and doves have also been listed.

Sharma says that the Indian courser and Desert courser are confined to few very arid clay soil bio-tope and

scanty scrub country. They are greatly disturbed by cattle and he suggests that these areas be made into sanctuaries. Sharma also says that both the common and imperial sand grouse are poached by hunters around tanks in the desert and these areas need much more protection.

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Of Drongos: The change in the scientific names of birds causes confusion and the second addition of Indian Hill Birds published in 1979 carries the old names of Drongos. For example, *Dissemurus paradiseus* instead of the newer version *Dicrurus paradiseus* for the Greater Racket-Tailed Drongo. However, now all the eight species of Drongos found in India have been placed in the Family Dicruridae, and I find that six of them are found in the Western Ghats. These are: The Grey drongo, the black drongo, the bronzed drongo, the white bellied drongo, the racket-tailed drongo, and the hair crested drongo. Has any one seen all or most of these in the same area ?

A close study of the Spotted Dove by S. Ashok Kumar, IAS., H.No.10-3-283/5, Humayun Nagar, Hyderabad-500 028: For nearly a week, a spotted dove has been frequenting our backyard garden, verandah and neighbour's terrace and krukrooling - obviously making a vocal proclamation announcing its territory. This became clear when I noticed a pair of spotted doves in our neighbour's backyard.

On January 3rd, a male dove appeared in the verandah and after conducting a survey of the area for a convenient site for nesting, vocalised for some time. It reappeared on 8th with its mate and made a joint survey of the verandah roof and stayed till noon. They returned two days later carrying twigs and depositing them on the top of the fifth floor at the extreme end of the verandah. While the female bird busied itself in tidying the site and spreading the twigs, the male rested on the rafter. An hour later, they were sitting out on the parapet wall huddled together in view of the inclement weather. Puffing up their bodies, they were preening and gently rubbing each other's beak. Before departing with its mate, the female visited the nest and gave final touches to it.

The next day morning I noticed both the birds in the nest and soon after they left, I checked the nest and found one egg. The second day I found the second egg in the nest. The incubation period actually commenced from January 13th, and both the birds shared the duties of guarding and incubating alternatively. During the nights, I found only the male bird in the nest.

Eggs:

Shape, colour and numbers	..	Oval, shell-white and two numbers.
Measurements	..	Length: 2.5 cms Breadth: 1.5 cms.
Position of the eggs	..	First egg NE-SW with tapering and facing NE. Second egg E-W with tapering end facing East.
Weight	..	First egg: 4.89 grams Second egg: 4.94 grams.

The change over of duties is preceded by vocalisation with courteous bowing. The moment the reliever bird lands on the parapet wall, the bird in the nest gets alerted and cocks its head with an air of expectancy. The relieved bird flies direct to the parapet wall, stretches its wings and legs and after preening for some time takes to wing. The bird in the nest occasionally changes its position.

With a view to verify whether the eggs are turned over during the incubation period, I had marked dots and + mark on both the eggs. Two days later I found both the eggs in the same position confirming that they are not turned over by either of the birds. The eggs were actually hatched on the 14th day after laying. The nest is generally kept neat and the shell pieces are discarded at a far off place.

Chicks:

Sixth day:	Eyes closed. Body covered with light brown and pale white feathers.
Seventh day:	Needle-like pale white feathers on the back, wings, tail, neck, breast and stomach.
Beak	:Steel grey.
Stomach	:Pale crimson red

Legs	:Pale crimson red. Tarsus, hind, inner, middle and outer toes well developed.
Feathers	:Primaries, outer and inner secondaries, lesser, median, greater and primary wing coverts developed. Vane not yet developed. Quill and rachis steel grey in colour. Pale-white needle-like feathers all over the body.
Measurements	:Wings 7 cms. Tail $1\frac{1}{2}$ cms. Beak 1 cm. Legs 4 cms.
Weight	:First chick: 46 grams Second chick: 47 grams
Ninth day	:Vane of primary, inner and outer secondary feathers, lesser, median greater and primary wing coverts developed. Vane of the feathers on the back and rump also developed. The down feathers covering the abdomen and throat are extremely soft and fluffy. Feathers brown in colour. Length of vane of tail and outer secondaries: $1\frac{1}{2}$ cms.
Fourteenth day:	length of tail feathers: 4 cms.

It is fascinating to watch the birds communicating with each other by repeated alternate calls, and to see the adult birds fondling the chicks by preening their breast and neck and covering them under their belly. The feeding of chicks by a process of regurgitation commenced from the third day and the frequency increased from the eighth day. Both the birds make calls near the nest to announce their arrival.

Feeding: The chicks stretch their necks and extend their beaks to reach the adult bird's beak. The adult bird inserts its upper mandible into the mouth of the chick and by a repeated process of bending and raising the neck and breast, brings the semi-digested food - white jelly-like semi-substance into its mouth and lets it into the gullet of the chick. While the adult bird is feeding one, the other chick inserts its beak from the side to draw its food. Feeding takes place in a standing position.

I had occasion to watch the female dove rushing to the nest to eject an intruding male sparrow. Two minutes later, the sparrow returned with two others to launch an attack. The female dove firmly stood guard and repulsed the attack which lasted for nearly five minutes.

The chicks, already fourteen days old, looked pretty with pale-white forehead, steel grey beak, brown feathers and pale-white fluffy down feathers. They perched on the rafter, preening, stretching their wings and legs and bowing. Having become sufficiently bold, they started probing, surveying and exploring their surroundings and indulging in make-believe take offs.

On the 17th day (February 12th) the male dove made a courtesy call and soon disappeared while the female bird repeatedly vocalised. The next day the male dove appeared and started courting by gently rubbing its back with that of its mate. I noticed intense activity in both the birds which flew from one end of the verandah to the other, traversed the entire length of the rafter, sometimes together and sometimes by turns and frequently indulged in vocalisation. It was evident that they were surveying the verandah for a possible nesting site for raising the next brood. Every time after making a rapid aerial survey, they returned to the top of the second pillar which I guessed would be the second nesting site.

The next day i.e., February 13th, the male dove joined its partner at the new site and after vocalisation started courting. While the male indulged in affectionate pecking, the female lay crouched to the ground with its wing tips and tail shivering. After a while, the male dove proceeded to the old nest, fed the chicks and rejoined the female to renew courting. Then it flew to the Neem tree and returned at 9-11 a.m., with a twig. The female got busy with nest building for raising the next brood. When the male hands over the twig, the female takes it directly in its beak, deposits and adjusts by bending the odd-shaped twigs. In 1 hr and 20 mts., the male bird made 23 sorties carrying twigs with intervals of 6, 7 and 8 minutes respectively. The female bird was busy picking the extended ends of the twigs, bending them and adjusting as fencing to prevent chicks from falling. Once or twice the male assisted the female in adjusting the twigs. After feeding the chicks, it resumed twig transportation at 11-40 a.m., and by 12-50 p.m., it made 29 trips with an interval of 11 minutes.

In the after noon when the chicks made exploratory trips, the female joined them. The male bird fed the chicks and soon after both the adult birds departed. The female bird returned in the evening, fed the chicks and flew away. One of the chicks - the bolder of the two made experimental flight and soon came down. I caught it quickly and replaced it in the nest but sometime later it flew to the Neem tree. As it was sufficiently dark, it could not be retrieved from the tree.

On 14th morning the female landed followed by the male and soon courting commenced. After some time the male bird left and the second chick came straight to the new nest. After feeding it for a couple of minutes, the female dove busied itself in completing the new nest. Every time it bent to adjust the odd shaped twigs, the second chick has been trying to reach its beak. Finding the new nest cosy and comfortable, the second chick resolved to stay put. The male resumed twig transportation at 8-47 a.m., and made 13 sorties till 10-30 a.m. By noon the new nest was completed. The second chick was not found in the evening and obviously it had left to explore the new world outside.

The next day morning I found an egg in the new nest while the old one was empty and abandoned. The female dove visited the old nest and finding it empty turned back, proceeded straight to the new nest and settled on the egg. The second egg was found on the next day. The birds went about their chores with cyclic rhythm to raise the next brood unmindful of my prying eyes.

A Favourite Mange Tree by Kunwar Suresh Singh:

My house is located on a large campus of the Institute, several hundred acres in area in Izatnagar, which is a suburb of Bareilly (U.P.). There are extensive areas under the various field crops and there are a large number of big avenue trees along the roads. Since the birds are not harrassed on the campus, plenty of bird life is seen during all the seasons of the year. The house itself has a compound about 100 m x 150 m with a large number of big trees including 7 mango trees. Two of these are rather old and are about 20-25 m tall, one on the left and the other on the right side in front of the house. They are very similar in character and possess many dead and dying branches. Though various birds perch on both the trees

the one on the left seems to be favoured for nesting and not the other one, though to my eyes both look equally suitable. During the last summer months I found the following birds nesting on it simultaneously: On a side branch which had broken off at about 2 m height, and was partly decayed, a pair of Crimsonbreasted Barbet, Megalaima haemacephala had excavated a hole on the underside facing South. They raised a family of 3 chicks which left the nest after some time. At this time the parents were again taking interest in the nest when they were dispossessed by a pair of large Green Barbets, M. zeylanica. These birds, however, excavated another hole some 5 cm away from the older one and successfully raised a family of at least 2 chicks. In both the cases both the parents were feeding the chicks and spending considerable time within the nest. When leaving the nest they often had some substance in their beaks which I presumed to be the faecal pellets of the chicks, which were always carried away till the birds were out of sight. I noticed one large Green Barbet had the naked skin around the eyes a little brighter and redder than the other and I presumed this to be the male.

On the top of the canopy 3 pairs of Common Green Pigeon, Treron phoenicopterus were trying to nest though at times as many as 16-20 used to collect. In the end only 2 pairs succeeded in completing a nest, some 2 m apart. The third pair which was chased away built a nest in another mango tree about 10 m away. The courtship was typical of the Family - the male chasing the female from one branch to another, all the while cooing and dipping the tail at very regular intervals, which I timed to be at 1 sec. intervals. It was only the male which indulged in this display for considerable periods of time and regularly, though on some occasions I saw the female also displaying in a similar fashion but for shorter period of time. The nests were too high up in the tree for me to get a close examination but one morning I did find the parts of egg shell underneath the tree, presumably after the chicks had hatched.

About 2 m away on one side and slightly lower, was a nest of a Black Drongo, Dicrurus adsimilis. While one parent was incubating the other used to perch on a branch nearby ready to chase other birds. (I could not distinguish the sexes between these two). The birds most often chased were Common Pariah Kites and House Crows. The moment a kite or a crow was seen approaching the tree,

the drongo would take off while the predator was still some distance away, and harry it. The kites and the crows very readily took the hint that they were not welcome and would immediately sheer off. The scene reminded me of a small fighter plane taking off to intercept the approaching enemy bomber before it arrived at the target area.

On the other side of the Green Pigeon nests was the nest of a Golden Oriole, Oriolus oriolus. This nest was very well made and compared to those of the Green Pigeons and the Drongo, was well concealed by mango leaves. The Orioles also chased away the House Crow (once the female was on the nest, it was only the male that did the chasing) when it came near the nest or even when it alighted on the ground below. This the crows frequently did as 2 pairs of crows were making a nest in the Eucalyptus trees which were some 10 m away. The crows had to alight on the ground to pick up the dead twigs of Eucalyptus with which they were making the nest. Almost invariably the crows were dive bombed by the Orioles. One pair of the crows was redoing an old nest while the other was building a new one. What with the Drongos and the Orioles chasing them, the crows had a rather hard time but they did manage to complete their nests and raise their families. These nests were 30 m above the ground.

Slightly lower down in the mango tree were the two nests of the Spotted Dove, Streptopelia chinensis and one nest of the Red Turtle Dove, S. araucae. Between these 3 pairs of doves there was much mutual chasing and at times a partly completed nest was either temporarily taken over by another pair or was partly destroyed. However, in the end all the 3 pairs settled down in their own nests, each within a few meters of the others.

During the months of May and June while these nesting activities were going on, I had to perforce sit out in the garden because of the load shedding of the electricity and thus I spent many interesting hours with a pair of binoculars.

During this period I did not see even a single nest on the other mango tree on the right side which was only about 20 m away and appeared to be equally suitable.

In the neighbouring compound there was a tall Neem tree (Azadirachta indica) which had died but was still standing.

At one time when one Banyan tree (Ficus bengalensis) was in fruit nearby I counted as many as 32 Crimsonbreasted Barbets resting on the leafless dead Neem tree. At times they would all sally out, singly or in small groups to the Banyan tree for feeding and after a lapse of time would again return to the Neem tree.

Pashan Lake, and New Additions to the Birds of Poona by
Taei Mundkur:

Around 8 kms from Poona lies Pashan Lake, built years ago by the British. It is not a very large lake nor very deep. The lake is fed by a stream from the South in addition to a few canals in the monsoon. A broad curved mud and stone bund lies to the North, to the right lies the overflow gate system. Two sides of the lake are surrounded by bullrushes and other reeds. There are a fair number of resident birds including coots, purple moorhens, egrets, kingfishers, and others.

The lake is a winter halt for a large number and variety of migrants especially ducks. They include Pintail, Spotbill, Shoveller, Common pochard, White eyed pochard, Tufted Duck, Cotton Teal, Common teal, Nukta, Gadwall, Lesser whistling teal and Garganey teal. Lesser whistling teals were the last to arrive this year and they seemed to keep to themselves mixing only with the Cotton teals. They looked a nervous lot and took off at the first sign of alarm. We were able to count only seven of them on all occasions.

On the 30th of November two friends and I went down to the lake early in the morning. It was a pleasant morning and we saw most of the above mentioned ducks, in addition to a pair of Purple Herons, a pair of Grey Herons, a few black winged Stilts, two female Marsh Harriers, which are always seen, pheasant tailed Jacanas in their non-breeding plumage. Just as we were packing up to return I saw nine large, light coloured ducks with a contrasting black and white wing pattern come in and land from the North. We were only able to get a quick glimpse of them as unfortunately for us the reeds between us were around six and a half feet tall. So I quickly stripped down to my pants and entered the water with my binoculars held above my head. When I reached the end of the barrier the water lapped at my ears. They turned out to be the

Brahminy Duck or Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna Ferruginea*) seen by us for the first time in Pune. It has not been seen ever since.

In late January, a domestic Mallard Cross was confiscated by members of the 'Friends of Animals' from a 'Ring the duck' stall at a fair. We later freed this duck at Pashan. It swam off very smartly. Often after that it has been seen there, the last time being only a few days ago. It is very conspicuous because of its large size and different colouration. It is always seen in the company of Spotbilled ducks, but unfortunately unable to fly off with them. So we will have to make up our minds whether to leave it there through the summer or recapture it and free it next winter, as it seems happy with its new found friends.

Another addition to the Pune bird list is the Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis Falcinellus*), a pair of which has been seen since mid-March this year nearly every day on an island on the river Mutha which flows behind my college in the city. We see them in the same spot feeding happily in the company of little, intermediate, large and cattle egrets which have now started turning into their breeding orange.

Early Arrival of Common Swallows (*Hirundo Rustica*) for 3 Consecutive Years in Madras by V. Santharam, 10 Leith Castle South St., Santhome, Madras-600 028: For the past 3 years, I have been maintaining regular notes on the dates of arrival and departure of the common swallow in Madras. I was surprised at noting that the birds had arrived earlier than has been recorded in the 'Handbook' (Vol.5), which states that this bird starts arriving in its wintering grounds by September/October.

But my own notes for 1978-79, 1979-80 and 1980-81 indicate that the birds start arriving by August. Following are some details for the 3 years.

1978-79: The first set of birds were seen at the Adyar Estuary on 11.8.1978 and later again on 13.8.78 (unfortunately I had not noted the numbers on both the occasions). The birds were seen in flight. On 15.8.78, there were about 40 birds sitting on a wire in the same area. On my next visit on 25.8.78, there were some 60-70 birds. Thereafter, they were regularly seen.

1979-80: The first set of birds for the year were seen on 4.8.79 near my house at about 6.30 a.m. I could see about 20-25 birds, heading southward in about 10 minutes. On the same day at Manali Tank, (15 kms north of Madras) at about 8.30 a.m., there were a good number of these birds hawking insects over the tank and in addition, a few were seen perched on a wire. The next day, I managed to see a couple of birds at Guindy Park. They were observed in small numbers at different parts of the city on 12th, 13th, 15th, 19th, 23rd, 27th and 28th. On 1st September about 40-50 birds were seen at the Adyar backwaters. After this date, they were seen regularly and in good numbers.

1980-81: The earliest sighting for this season was on 2nd August 1980. There was a single bird that morning near my house. On 9th and 10th, there were solos near the Adyar river. On 11th, I saw about 4 birds near my house. On 16th a single bird was seen at Adyar Estuary and again on 25th in fairly good numbers. On 28th, in the same locality, I saw a huge concentration of about 5-800 (if not more) swallows, hawking insects about the place at about 4.30 pm. But by 6.00 pm., there were hardly any birds left. Since, they were seen commonly.

There has, however, not been any variations in the dates of departure. Their numbers start declining by March and are scarce by mid-April. In 1978-79, the last birds were seen on 15.4.79. For 1979-80, I saw the last swallows on 19.4.80, on which occasion there were two birds in flight. For 1980-81, the last birds were seen on 3.5.81, though they were scarce by middle of April.

It would be interesting to know from readers their observations on the arrival of the migrant in their area.

A WWF News Release:

Crane Study in Bhutan:

In continuation of the study undertaken by WWF-India to ascertain the status and behaviour of the rare blacknecked crane, Mr. Prakash Gole visited Bhutan in February 1981. According to the available information, small flocks of cranes arrive every year in the Boomthang Valley in mid-November and depart by mid-March.

In December 1980, a flock of about 20 blacknecked cranes had been seen by the Border Roads personnel in the Boomthan Valley. Mr. Gole, when he visited later, saw thirteen cranes including a single chick accompanying a pair in the Boomthan Valley and five adults in the Gyetsa Valley. It is, however possible that the flock seen in the Gyetsa Valley came from Boomthan and that the cranes commute between these two adjacent valleys. According to the reports received from the local residents, the blacknecked crane never reside in the valley throughout the winter, but make sudden and brief appearance from time to time.

The cranes foraged mainly in wet and semi-wet areas, where generally water flowed. Cranes were seen probing and picking up food - insects, fallen grains and some vegetable matter including small tubers - near these water channels. Their diet also included earthworms, grasshoppers, small bugs, beetles, and even flies. It is probable that cranes initially congregate at one spot when food is in sufficient supply to feed all; as the supply gets progressively reduced, the cranes disperse in smaller flocks over the whole valley floor in search of adequate food.

The blacknecked crane was observed to be quiet and unmonstrative. There was no courtship, bugling, unison calls, intra-specific aggression and other interesting aspects of behaviour. The cranes would fly away, giving alarm calls, if any observer approached closer than about 75 meters.

Flocks of blacknecked cranes were also observed in the Popshika Valley - situated at a lower altitude - where they were scattered in different parts of the marsh and also in the field. The birds were found to be less wary here than in Boomthan, probably because of less human interference due to the comparatively greater inaccessibility of Popshika Valley.

The cranes, that winter in Boomthan and Popashika are not very successful in rearing chicks probably due to adverse factors obtaining in their breeding grounds. The mortality rate is also possibly very high. The original roosting marsh of the cranes, observed during the 1978 expedition, existed no more. The birds have, therefore, modified their behaviour to the extent that for roosting they are adopting mountain slopes and places further removed from human settlements.

The increase in agricultural and horticultural practices, however, can adversely effect the crane habitat. A plan to drain the extensive marsh for agriculture poses a real threat to the cranes' winter habitat. The plight of the blacknecked crane was brought to the notice of the officials concerned and it is hoped that this scheme would be either modified or abandoned altogether. Pictures of this rare species were also distributed in Bhutan to make them aware of its endangered status.

One of the rarest among the 15 crane species, the black-necked crane breeds in Ladakh, Tibet and South China and migrates to Bhutan and other areas during the winter.

Correspondence:

Christmas Island Frigate Bird seen in Karnataka by
Acharva Dwarakanath, Nath-Villa, Ajjarakadu, Udupi-570101:

Today I had the rare opportunity of seeing a Man O'war Bird, the Christmas Island Frigate Bird (*Fregata andrewsi* Mathews).

The bird had struggled to a village yesterday and found alive by a farmer in his fields in a wounded condition. Today Mr.P.G. Nayak, Dr.S.P. Nayak and myself got the bird (still alive) and after verifying from A Field Guide to the Birds by Roger Tory Peterson, Birds of America, edited by T.Gilburt Peterson and Dr.Salim Ali, Birds of Travancore and Cochin we think it is *Fregata andrewsi* Mathews.

We think it is the first record for Dakshina Kannada District and perhaps for Karnataka.

We are feeding it with fish, and as I write this it has already gobbled two. We have taken colour snaps, and after we get it developed and printed shall round you one two maps.

The right shank seems to be slightly injured.

Weight 800 grams

Wing span about 6'5"

We presume it is a female by the colouration, and it fits the description given in the books. [The bird died subsequently ED.].

Bird Reaction to Light: The other Way Round. by
Mosaddique Umar, High Court, Gauhati - 781001, Assam:

With great interest, I have been reading in various issues of the Newsletter accounts of the bird mystery of Jatinga. In the process, I have learnt that this phenomenon also occurs in Mizoram and some parts of South-East Asia. As far as I have learnt no one has been able to establish conclusively why certain birds commit mass suicide in that fashion. I do not think any one ever will. After all man cannot think and see like birds. Besides, the occurrence of this phenomenon is so limited and the place of occurrence so out of the way that any systematic research is difficult. Here are some instances of bird reaction to light.

In my home district Goalpara, and some other parts of Assam, two methods of killing aquatic birds are practised by protein-hungry villagers, by using artificial light. One is a group effort and the other individual.

The first, which is practised mainly in summer, requires a country boat, two boat men, one spearman, one petromax, one multi-headed fishing spear and one metal plate. The lighted petromax is lashed to the prow of the boat. A shade is placed next to the light to keep the crew and the rest of the boat in darkness. Next to the shade stands the spearman carrying the multi-headed fishing spear with a very long shaft. While one crew member pushes the boat as fast as possible with a long pole through floating vegetation, the other keeps on hanging the metal plate with a stone in a regular rythm. When the glow of the petromax catches a bird, the spearman directs the boat to it by signalling with his hand. As soon as it is within range, the spearman impales the paralysed bird. And the hunt goes on as long as the staming of the crew permit. Not that all the birds spotted get killed. But a large number is slaughtered during the night. The list of victims includes lesser and large whistling teals, purple moorhen, kora, pheasant-tailed and bronze-winged jacanas, and crakes. As I have never been on these ghastly expeditions, I am not sure what paralyses the poor birds - the light, or the beating of the metal plate, or the combination of both. This method is used in upper A Assam in winter also.

The other technique, which is practised in winter, requires a piece of bamboo cut at one end just below a joint. The hollow between the cut end and the next joint is filled with kerosine and a wick inserted. The killer carries the lighted torch in one hand and a stick in the other. He

then slowly and as noiselessly as possible, walks into a swamp and wades around. The ducks, almost all migratory, just keep looking at the approaching light, and get killed by a blow of the stick. When the operation involves a pair, the other man uses a throwing net and captures the ducks alive. The victims are almost all ducks.

In my younger days, I once tried to shoot duck, snipes, night herons, in darkness by using a 5-cell hunting flash light. The moment the flash light was switched on, the birds took off in alarm and flew away. But it seems the duller and continuous glow of petromax and country torch, which do not have a sharp beam like flash light that originates suddenly, does not frighten ducks or other birds. Only the birds know why. Does this have any connection with the Jatings mystery? Please comment, esteemed readers.

Coots and Cotton teal in Kerala by T.V. Jose:

I refer to the note, 'Two Additions to the Birds of Kerala' by L.Narassivayam and P.S. Sivaprasad of Mar-April Issue.

I have recorded in my childhood notes seeing coots in the months September/October in Trichur year after year in singles and pairs.

During the last 5 years or so I see a bird new altogether, which is the cotton teal. Though very common elsewhere I never saw it throughout my childhood and boyhood days in Trichur (Kerala). Salim Ali too says in the Hand Book that the bird is not reported from Kerala (Vol.I. page 191 line 5).

Bird Watching Camp in Pune (Conducted by Bird Watching Club Pune) by Dr.R.S. Bidwe:

The Bird Watching Club of Pune decided to hold a camp for children of the age group 14-18 years from 27.5.81 to 31.5.1981. Though initially there was little response, later, about 25 people from Pune and outside registered themselves for the camp. Rs.20/- was the fees for the camp.

From 27th May to 31st May, 1981 boys and girls were trained in the field of bird watching. They were kept

fully busy from morning to night. Visits to Zoological Department of Poona University and Zoological Survey of India were arranged. There were daily film and slide shows arranged by the Forest Department. One slide show was conducted by a young Bird Watcher, Mr. Kiran Purandare. It is worth noting that the youngest bird watcher Master Tejas Gole delivered a lecture on bird nests for half an hour. He also showed his collection of bird feathers. On the fifth day all of them were taken to National Defence Academy to see peacocks which are not seen else where near Pune.

It was noted that boys aged 14 - 18 picked up the art of bird watching quickly, and showed keen interest in other activities like identification plants, insects and animals.

We have concluded from this camp that such a short camp will bring up many bird watchers in future.

Survey of Pheasants by Kunwar Suresh Singh:

There are two groups of birds in India which are pursued more widely and vigorously for sport than others - members of Anseriformes and Galliformes. While the majority of Anseriformes visit us as winter migrants, the Galliformes remain as residents showing only limited local migration and the latter are thus vulnerable during the breeding season also. The World Pheasant Association-India has been acutely aware of the lack of recent knowledge about the status of the Indian pheasants. The information available in literature is very much dated and is no longer valid except as a matter of reference. However, a start has been made and a team of the Zoological Survey of India led by the well-known ornithologist, Dr. B.S. Lamba (all team members belonged to WPA-I) spent about 40 days working in four valleys of Kashmir in April-May 1981. They logged about 168 man-hours of observation. They concluded that the absolute densities of the 5 species that were sought were: Koklas 582, Himalayan Monal 118, Chukar 104, Snowcock 13 and Western Tragopan 0.

The survey was carried out using the usual call method and also by sighting later in the day. Unfortunately the party did not have the use of taped recordings of all these birds to play back. It is hoped that when such recordings are played back, a few Tragopans would be located.

The second phase of the survey will be carried out in September-October 1981 in Jammu area and a repeat survey in Kashmir in 1982 spring. It may be possible to include volunteers for the second phase for which the WPA-India may be contacted. The survey was made possible by the active cooperation of the Zoological Survey of India and the Wildlife Department of J and K Government.

Dr. Lamba intends to read the full paper at the II International Symposium on Pheasants due to be held in Srinagar in September 1982.

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FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. XXI No.8

August 1981

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A Check list of Birds of Guindy Deer Park by
R. Selvakumar, R.Sukumar, V.Narayanaswamy and
S.Theodore Baskaran.

Correspondence

S.K. Reeves comments on 'Extract from a letter by
Maninder Singh'.

Editorial

July-Aug. Newsletter: The editor tenders his apologies for the delay in the production of the July and August issues. To save further delay a combined July-August issue is being sent under one cover.

There is much confusion in the Newsletter office, as will be evident from the fact that the July issue was cyclostyled on only one side of the paper. There has been a change in Secretaries. The previous incumbent did not leave a full record before departure, and the new one has not yet been able to master the situation. The editor has been receiving complaints regarding the non-receipt of Newsletters by some subscribers, and it is hoped that things will be set right in a month or two. Meanwhile, complaints will be welcome, because that is the only way in which mistakes will come to the attention of the editor.

Lesser Florican sighted in Ratlam District by Salim Ali:

According to the Times of India report of August 5th, 'Dr. Salim Ali was delighted when he succeeded in sighting a group of Lesser Floricans near Ringnod about 15 kilometers from Jaora in Ratlam District'. The editor happened to meet Salim Ali after this incident and was told that a local forest officer had managed to tape record the breeding calls of these birds. When the tapes were played the birds leapt up above the grass where they were hidden. As the book of Indian Birds says 'The cock's nuptial display consists of constantly jumping or springing up above cover of long grass or crops. This believed to advertise his presence to hens and to warn off rival cocks.'

The Christmas Island Frigate Bird: Acharya Dwarakanath has sent information about a Christmas Island Frigate Bird (Frigeta Andrewsii) which was found at Posar village in Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka. Obviously this bird was driven inland by a storm. Attempts were made to feed it on fish but it unfortunately died a few days later. The stuffed bird has been kept at the Kasturba Medical College, Manipal, and is likely to be transferred to the Bombay Natural History Society. On 3rd August there was a press report of another bird of the same species caught alive on the sea-shore in Udupi Taluk.

A specimen of Frigate minor which was found in 1965 has also been kept at the KMC College.

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Drought in Doddagubbi: While we are distressed by news of floods in several parts of North India including Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh we are facing one of the severest droughts in the south interior portion of Karnataka. Infact we are in a panic about the descending level of our well and if the rains do not come within the next few days we may have to migrate elsewhere. Unfortunately, this is not as easy for humans as it is for birds.

Incidentally, because of the unusual rainfall pattern this year in large portions of the country birdwatchers must pay a special attention to changes in populations of birds in regions affected by flood and drought.

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A Check List of Birds of Guindy Deer Park, Madras by R.Selvakumar, R.Sukumar, V. Narayanaswamy, S.Theodore Baskaran:

Introduction: The 500-acre Guindy Deer Park, Madras, is a remnant of coastal scrub jungle of the southern dry zone. In addition to the famed Black Buck and Chital, the park offers sanctuary to numerous birds. Being a typical slice of South Indian scrubby plains, a fairly representative cross section of the birds of South Indian plains can be seen here. The myriads of insects, aquatic life in the ponds and seasonal seeds and fruits that the park has to offer, harbour the residents and attracts migrant birds. This sanctuary has recently been elevated to the status of a national park.

This check list is based on the observations of a small band of bird-watchers for three years (1972-75) and is not at all exhaustive; only confirmed and repeated sightings have been included, after crosschecking. Birds observed soaring over-head have also been included (for example, the White-bellied sea Eagle).

Podicipedidae

1. Little Grebe or Dabchick

Ardeidae

2. Indian Paddy Bird
3. Indian Reef heron
4. Night heron

Accipitridae

5. Brahminy kite
6. Black-winged kite
7. Shikra
8. Sparrow-hawk
9. Tawny eagle
10. White-bellied Sea-eagle
11. Short-toed eagle
12. Booted eagle
13. Black-crested Baze
14. Northern Goshawk
15. Kestrel

Phasianidae

16. Grey partridge

Charadriidae

17. Red-wattled lapwing
18. Yellow-wattled lapwing

Rallidae

19. White-breasted waterhen

Scolopacidae

20. Green shank
21. Spotted sandpiper
22. Common snipe
23. Little stint

Recurvirostridae

24. Black-winged stilt

Burhinidae

25. Stone Curlew

Columbidae

26. Spotted dove
27. Red turtle dove
28. Ring dove
29. Common green pigeon

Psittacidae

30. Rose-ringed parakeet

Cuculidae

31. Koel
32. Crow-pheasant
33. Pied-crested cuckoo
34. Red-winged crested cuckoo
35. Common Hawk-cuckoo or
Brain fever Bird
36. Small-green billed Malkoha
37. Plaintive Cuckoo

Tytonidae

38. Barn Owl

Strigidae

39. Spotted owlet
40. Colored Scops Owl

Apodidae

41. Palm Swift

Alcedinidae

42. White-breasted Kingfisher
43. Pied Kingfisher
44. Black-capped kingfisher
45. Small Blue Kingfisher

Meropidae

46. Small Green Bee-eater
47. Blue-tailed Bee-eater
48. Indian Roller

Upupidae

49. Hoopoe

Capitonidae

50. Crimson-breasted Barbet

Picidae

51. Golden-backed Woodpecker

Pittidae

52. Indian Pitta

Alaudidae

53. Indian Small Skylark

54. Redwinged Bush lark

55. Black-bellied Finch lark

Hirundinidae

56. Common swallow

Laniidae

57. Bay-backed Shrike

Oriolidae

58. Golden Oriole

Dicruridae

59. Black Drongo

60. White-bellied drongo

Artamidae

61. Ashy swallow shrike

Sturnidae

62. Grey-headed Myna

63. Indian Myna

64. Brahminy myna

65. Jungle myna

Corvidae

66. Jungle crow

67. House crow

Campephagidae

68. Common wood shrike

69. Large cuckoo shrike

70. Black-headed cuckoo shrike

71. Small minivet

Irenidae

72. Iora

Pycnonotidae

73. Red-vented Bulbul

74. White-cheeked Bulbul

75. Red-whiskered Bulbul

76. White-browed Bulbul

Turdidae

77. Orange-headed Ground thrush

Muscicapidae

78. White-headed babbler

79. Yellow-eyed Babbler

80. Tickell's Blue Flycatcher

81. Red-breasted Flycatcher

Sylviidae

82. Indian Wren Warbler

83. Greenish Warbler

84. Orphean Warbler

85. Ashy Wren Warbler

Monarchidae

86. Paradise Flycatcher

87. Tailor bird

Turdidae

88. Indian Robin

89. Magpie Robin

90. Redstart

91. Pied Bush chat

92. Collored Bush chat

Muscicapidae

- 93. Lesser White-throat
- 94. Asian Brown flycatcher
- 95. Blue-throated flycatcher

Nectariniidae

- 101. Purple-rumped sunbird
- 102. Yellow-backed sunbird
- 103. Purple sunbird

Motacillidae

- 96. Grey Wagtail
- 97. White Wagtail
- 98. Large Pied Wagtail
- 99. Forest Wagtail

Ploceidae

- 104. House sparrow
- 105. White-throated munia.

Dicaeidae

- 100. Tickell's Flower Pecker

Correspondence:

Mr. S.K. Reeves comments on 'Extract from a letter by Maninder Singh': On reading this extract, in the June Issue of the Newsletter, I was intrigued by the reference to a book entitled, 'Birds in my Indian Garden' by Alexander O.Hume.

Firstly, I do not know of an author of this name who has written any book on Indian Birds. I wonder if there is some confusion here with the celebrated Allan Octavian Hume, the author of 'The Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds' (1889-90), co-author with Capt.C.H.T.Marshall of 'The Game Birds of India, Burmah and Ceylon' (1878-80), and founder and editor of 'Stray Feathers - a Journal of Ornithology for India and its Dependencies' (1873-99)? This Hume, however, did not write a book entitled 'Birds in my Indian Garden', and would have boasted a personal bird checklist far in excess of 87.

Secondly, there was a book published in 1960 with the title mentioned by Mr.Maninder Singh, but this was written by the late Mr.Malcolm MacDonald, about the birds he saw in his Delhi garden, when he was U.K.High Commissioner in India in the late 1950s. Here again, the figure of 87 is puzzling, for Mr.MacDonald claims in his book (Page 17) that he saw 136 species of birds in or from his garden.

Incidentally, in the editorial of the same Issue of the Newsletter, the editor mistakenly refers to Mr.MacDonald's book as 'Birds in a Delhi Garden'. Also when describing his witnessing of the courtship of Spotted Munias, the

editor expresses the belief that Mr. MacDonald also described this courtship in the book in question. To be strictly correct, on Page 20 of his book, Mr. MacDonald describes the courtship of the White-throated Munia. I have no doubt, however, that the pre-copulatory antics of all the members of this genus are much alike.

I wonder if Mr. Maninder Singh could throw some further light on the subject.

Editor: Zafar Futehally

Dodda Gubbi Post, Via Vidyanagar, Bangalore - 562 134

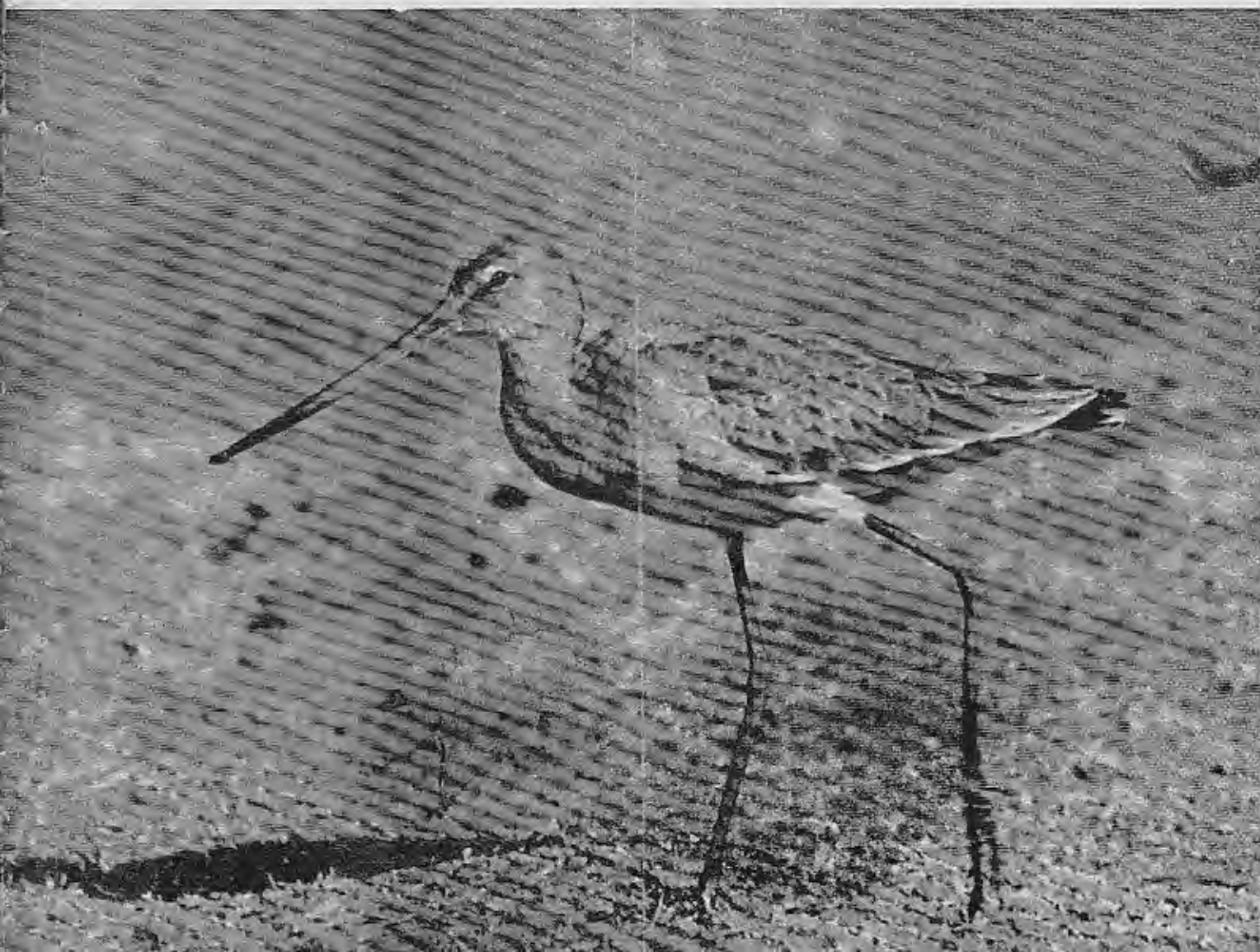
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Cover Picture: Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Photo by: E. Hanumantha Rao

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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VOL. XXI NO. 10 OCT. 1981



NEWSLETTER
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Bar Headed Goose in India by Prakash Gole.

An unusual nest of the Black Bittern by V.Santharam.

Some interesting observations by V.Santharam.

Red-letter Days in Hazaribagh by Ajana.

Siberian Cranes discovered in Iran and China - From The International Council for Bird Preservation Newsletter.

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Nests of Weaver Birds on Telegraph wires by Kamala Venkataramani.

A reply to Lavkumar Khachar regarding Chastnut headed bee-eater by P.S. Thakker.

Editorial:

September-October Newsletter: The editor regrets that he has to be away from base a great deal within the next two months and so as a matter of convenience the September-October issue of the Newsletter is again a combined one. As a matter of fact I wonder whether the Newsletter should not be converted into a bimonthly (six issues a year). It would be more economical and perhaps on that basis the subscription of Rs.15/- would cover costs without too much dependence on advertisement revenue. Also 30 days is too small a period to get in and process contributions. It would also enable the Editor to pay more attention to details. I would welcome your reaction to this proposal.

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Diversion of river to save the Dipper: The London Times of 24th January 1980 refers to a remarkable effort by the Severn-Trent Water Authority to divert a river to allow officials from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to construct a special nesting box on the bank. This was done because the only known nesting site of the Dipper in Warwickshire was likely to be destroyed during reconstruction work. As we know the Dipper is very specific about its habitat and likes fast running water and gravel beds. To ensure that this particular pair of Dippers continued to breed here a nesting box of plywood with an intricate drainage system was created. Apparently, this kind of experiment has been tried out before with success in Czechoslovakia and let us hope that this effort of R.S.P.B. will also succeed.

Anyone who has seen the Dipper will appreciate the fuss that was made over this pair. I forget whether I saw the bird in Sikkim or Kashmir but the way it dips under fast flowing streams to pick up aquatic insects from the stony ground, and holds its own against the current, testifies to its unusual qualities.

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Advantage of a large Repertoire of songs: The Times News Service says 'Although it has been known for centuries that some individual birds can sing numerous variations on the song typical of their species, only recently have scientists put forward explanations of why that might be advantageous. Now, three scientists working in Indiana have analysed the behaviour of the red-winged blackbird (*Agelaius phoeniceus*)

and shown that the more songs a bird can sing the larger the territory it can obtain, and so the more mates it can attract,the preference of a female for a male with a large territory is easy enough to understand. The same scientists have already shown that a large territory provides more food and other resources, and that the holder of a large territory is more likely to provide assistance in feeding the young.'

'Some of our readers will know of the studies made by Brian Bertram on the Hill Myna in Assam to find out if its talking ability was of any ecological significance. As far as I recall Bertram was not able to arrive at any conclusion.

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Painted Storks: The Southern interior district of Karnataka where we stay suffered a severe drought this year. Till the middle of August the rainfall was only 242 milimetres, almost half of what it should be in a normal year. But a good shower on the 20th of August gave new life to the Doddagubbi Tank and to my surprise and delight a group of 13 Painted Storks (*Ibis leucocephalus*) and 3 Grey Herons (*Ardea cinerea*) arrived on the lake. The manner in which the leggy storks pace up and down the water is most amusing. I watched them for a long time at noon and it was instructive to see how they operated in concert both on land and in the air. When they flew they had to beat their wings rapidly while near the ground but as they ascended higher and higher the rate of the flapping was reduced, and finally they were able to soar in circles on thermal currents without any effort at all. As they circled over the tank I thought there was one leader who directed their movements as they all seemed to follow his line of flight. But while there was seemingly always a leader, it was not always the same bird.

On the morning of the 30th August only three Storks were seen. The usual group of a dozen Green Shanks and a large number of Common Sandpiper have arrived.

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Past issues of the Newsletter: I am ashamed to admit that I have not got a full set of the Newsletter before 1977. Has any reader a complete set from 1959 to 1976? If there is a set available, perhaps some energetic reader would

be willing to make an index of Author and Subject. Once this is done many other steps can be taken. We could, for example, produce bound copies of 5 year periods each of these could carry a new preface highlighting the more interesting facts observed during these years. Are there any takers for this effort ?.

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Some Observations on the Breeding Activities of the Indian Koel: *Eudynamis scolopacea* (Linnaeus) in Bhubaneswar, Orissa by H.P. Patnaik: The male Indian Koel is well known for its familiar kuoo-kuoo calls. It becomes increasingly noisy with the advance of the hot weather and is one of the earliest bird voices at dawn. The breeding of koels takes place during April-August according to Salim Ali though Lamba reports their breeding from May to July beginning a little earlier in South India and ending a little later in North India.

In South India, particularly in Kerala, Neelakantan reported that koels began to sing their ku-voo ku-voo calls in December becoming most vociferous in January and continuing till May. Obviously it is during these months that their calls can be heard and therefore it may be presumed that breeding activity is confined to this period. While announcing the Madhav Gadgil's prize in the Newsletter Volume 20 No.12, 1980 it was indicated that the breeding call of the male koel could be a good indicator of a breeding season. Keeping these statements in mind an attempt was made to study the breeding activities of koels and to watch them during the breeding season in Bhubaneswar, Orissa during 1981.

The calls were mainly recorded at two locations, one in the heart of the city and the other in the western corner of the city. The locations were 3 kilometres apart and were clad with scattered and fairly thick foliage of mango, jack fruit, neem, bael, banian and peepal trees. In the first location the observations were made daily from 06.15 to 08.15 hours, 12.45 to 14.45, and 17.15 to 18.15. In the second location the periods were 8.30 to 10.30, 10.30 to 12.30 and 15.00 hours to 17.00 hours.

For every week of the month from February 81 to July '81 a statement was maintained showing the number of days on which calls were recorded, the number of calls recorded

at various hours of the day and the total calls recorded. Details of the temperature indicating the maximum and the minimum and the average was also kept. During the first 2 weeks of February no calls were recorded. In the 3rd and 4th weeks there were 139 calls. In the last week of March there were 587 calls; in the last week of April there were as many as 4,209 calls which came down to 1,478 in the 4th week of May; 36 in the 4th week of June and nil in the 4th week of July.

The records show that the calls were first heard from the third week of February and by the second week of March pair formation was noticed. On two occasions on the morning of 19 and 21st February about 14 male and 4 female koels were seen basking together on a neem tree in the warmth of the rising sun. This was perhaps due to the extreme foggy weather that prevailed during the previous nights and in the morning. It is relevant to report here that Lamba suggested that a number of unmated males who presumably could not establish a hold over their territories spent the time together in a single large tree. But this could not explain the above observations because the breeding season had not started by then and at least some of the females were present with the males. At this time the females were observed feeding on ripened tinda and kanyara fruits.

It was noticed that in the month of April when the average temperature was 30.3° centigrade, the calls recorded were the maximum. They were even heard before sunrise and after sun-set during the twilight period.

The foster parents of koels the House crows began collecting their nesting materials from the first week of April and continued to build their nests upto the last week of May. Most of the nests were completed by 10th of May, though a few crows continued to build their nests till the 1st week of June. There were a few crows which were nesting as late as the 3rd week of July.

The date of completion of nests by House crows coincided with the peak activity of koels. In otherwords, the 4th week of April was the period when the koels called the most and this was also the time when the house crows had either completed their nests or were on the point of completing them.

The crows took 10-14 days to build their nests and within 3 to 4 days of completion of the nests egg laying commenced.

This period seemed to be best suited for the female koel to lay its eggs inside the foster's nest. Lamba observed that the female koel takes advantage of every temporary absence or distraction of crows. The female koels also make use of her dull colour to accomplish its mission in the uncertain gray light of dawn. I agree with Lamba when he said that the male koel apparently establishes a territory in a promising patch of trees abounding in crows and announces it by its lusty song early in the breeding season. In this way presumably the male koel invites the female to a position of advantage.

During May the male and female koels were seen feeding on berries of *Bremna Mucronata*, on riped berries of neem, figs of peepal and banian and on ripe papaya. Males also fetch berries to feed the females.

By the 1st week of June most of the nestlings were visible and house crows were seen feeding the young. During the period from 4th to 6th June 1981 about 13 nests were examined and it was found that out of the 13 nests only 10 had eggs or nestlings or both. Out of those 10 nests 4 had been parasitised by koels. Out of these 4 parasitised nests 2 nests had young koel chicks less than a week old, one nest having a pair of female koel chicks approximately 3 weeks old and the other nest with 2 eggs of koel. The eggs were easily distinguishable from those of the house crows because they were broad at one end and compressed towards the other end. In one nest there were 5 juveniles which were naked and indistinguishable, as to species, but when I observed these nests on 3.7.81 I found that the 5 juveniles were all koels. Two of them were females and 3 were males and there were no house crow nestlings at all. I thought that this happened because the female koels laid their eggs in the nest of the host before the foster parents could raise their brood. But this conclusion differs from that of Lamba who could not observe any koel eggs in a freshly completed crows nest which did not contain an egg of the owner.

As a result of observing two particular nests which contained either the nestlings of koels or crows, I come to the following conclusions:

1. Koel nestlings along with nestlings of crows became fullfledged in 30-32 days.
2. They remained inside the nest of the host for 32 to 41 days.
3. Outside the nest, they continued to demand food from

the foster parents for 20-23 days. During this period when the foster parents arrive with food the young koels emitted chee-chee sounds in a suppressed manner while the young crows uttered a shivering ka-ka.

4. Around residences the food given by the foster parents consisted of kitchen scraps, and occasionally winged termites, when the latter came up in swarms.

Towards the end of July and the beginning of August most of the young koels were seen alone concealing themselves behind the foliage of plants, whereas the young crows moved along with their own parents all the time demanding food from them.

Authors Address: Mr.H.P.Patnaik, Department of Entomology, College of Agriculture, Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology, Bhubaneswar 751003, ORISSA.

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Bar Headed Goose in India by Prakash Gole. 277 Sindh Housing Society, Poona 411 007: In India the Bar-headed Goose is mainly associated with our large rivers in the north: the Ganges, the Jumna, the Chambal and the Brahmaputra. In winter they spread mainly in north-central India becoming scarcer towards the east and the west. Their breeding within Indian limits was first reported by Osmaston in 1923 in Ladakh at Shushal (present Chushul), near the salt lake Tso Kar and on an island in the Tso Moriri. All these breeding grounds are situated at a height of approximately 15000 ft. Outside India this goose breeds in Tibet and in Central Asia, in the region belonging to the Soviet Union.

I was able to visit its breeding grounds in Ladakh during my survey of the status of the Blacknecked Crane. In my search to locate the breeding grounds of Blacknecked Crane, I came across a breeding colony of this goose which hitherto remained unreported. This was near the south end of lake (Tso) Moriri. Let me tell you how it was discovered.

On 8th June 1980 our party reached the north end of Tso Moriri. There is a small island in the lake near the north end. On the sloping sides of this island we saw the geese nesting. There were about 15 nests visible. The nests were mere pads of vegetation. The grass-like nesting material had obviously come from the lake itself. Even pairs of Great Crested Grebes had utilised the same plant to build their floating nests.

My observations of the nesting birds showed that only one bird, probably the female, alone incubates. The other bird stands guard near the nest or swims nearby. The incubating bird leaves the nest occasionally and goes near the edge of the water to drink or feed in the shallows. Once when a raven came to inspect the island he was chased and driven away by a pair of goose and a Tibetan common tern. The birds that were feeding in the lake often upended like dabbling ducks.

A few days later, crossing the vast cold desert our party reached the south end of Tso Moriri. Here, a small stream that flows in from the south, meets the lake in many channels. The terrain is not marshy but rather it is a plateau of shingle. It stretches south to a considerable distance and may probably be under water in the recent past as the lake is gradually shrinking.

A few local men with their sheep flocks were camping nearby. They informed us that to the south-east a large number of goose could be found nesting. We were also assured liberal supply of eggs if this was what we were after. We crossed the plateau of shingle and coarse yellow grass and Caragana. In a muddy depression we observed a pair of Blacknecked Cranes. Beyond this depression was a body of water which was actually a longish arm of a still larger one to the north, a sizeable lake, a couple of miles in diameter and with an island in the centre. As far as we could see, it did not appear to be connected to the Tso Moriri. Several geese were seen nesting on the island.

The island looked like a flat-topped pyramid with its sides sloping down to the water. The nests were seen on

the flat top as well as on the sloping sides of the island. At some places they were packed very closely and at other places they were scattered. I counted 45 nests on the sides while 20 birds could be seen incubating on the flat top. The nests were not made of any vegetation. Indeed in the moonscape around not a blade of grass could be seen. They were mere scrapes in the silt lined with down which was banked up against their sides.

Observations of these nests also showed that only one bird incubates while the other stands guard. There was some squabbling and aggression to be seen between neighbours. As observed by Bailey in Tibet (1908), some eggs were laid quite prominently in the open without any bird attending to them. Some eggs had already hatched and egg-shells were scattered on the island. Unfortunately we lacked any means of crossing the lake to reach the island. As such the number of eggs in each nest could not be examined.

It seems that the families leave the island as soon as eggs hatch. I saw only one family with two goslings on the island. All the other families with goslings were in the lake. Most of these families had four goslings in tow.

It was not known on what the goslings were fed. The lake appeared to be quite deep and without any plant life. But the geese were seen to be vigorously searching for food upending themselves. Apparently insect life should be available. A party of adults which was closely watched from a distance of 100 ft. fed on small fish and insects that were found in the fresh-water channels.

Status in India: In the last century many observers referred to the abundance of Bar-headed Goose in north India in winter. A. Hume saw about 10,000 geese in a ten-mile stretch of river near the confluence of the Chmabal and the Jumna. (1881). Barnes said that it was abundant in Sind while S. Baker saw huge flocks on all large rivers in Bengal.

However, later observers did not see them in such immense numbers. Hutson says in 1934 it was as abundant as the Greylag. The late Mrs. Usha Ganguli mentioned that they were irregularly seen on the Jumna, the largest party seen was that of 29 geese.

To assess the present position of these geese in our country, an appeal was made through two well-known bird-journals. Observers were asked to give information on

the places and type of habitat used by the geese, their number, and whether it is increasing or decreasing, the probable causes of the same, their arrival and departure dates and their food and other habits.

Places where Bar-headed congregate have been reported as, along the Chambal river (thousands), in the Ajmer-Marwar area of Rajasthan (1800-2000), the reservoir at Narora (500) and at Etah (20-25), the Bird Sanctuary at Bharatpur (200), the Sultanpur Zheel (100), the Kaziranga National Park (50) and the Goalpara district of Assam where the geese are mostly seen along the Brahmaputra. Their number, according to the correspondents, has remained more or less stationery, or has somewhat declined. Hunting, encroachment of cultivation and settlement on riverine islands where the geese used to find resting and roosting places and increased prevalence of netting are given as probable causes of their decline.

Their usual habitat remains that of large rivers and reservoirs. They are seen to associate with other ducks and geese though a party of Bar-heads usually keeps to itself. Their food in winter is given as paddy and wheat shoots, chana and barley leaves and some pulses. They are accused of causing some damage to winter crops.

Their arrival is said generally to coincide with the Diwali festival and most leave by late March though a few could still be seen in mid-April.

One observer has described their winter routine. 'At night they rest on open sand-bars and in wadis on sand-bars where they can have a clear sky-line to show any approaching predator. They fly out at dawn to where they find suitable vegetation. At about 11 am they fly back to isolated Chur (river islands) areas, beaches or sand-bars where the current is fast, take bath and go to sleep. It is then that they are most vulnerable to hunters, as they hate to leave the cool beach and fall to the approaching guns. If undisturbed the siesta continues upto 2 pm when they fly out again in search of food.'

Status outside India: The Soviet authors Gladkov and Dement'ev say that though it was once fairly common, in recent years it has suffered a great decline in their area. No information has come out of Tibet. But Dr. Ripley who visited Lhasa in 1980 saw no geese and according to him hunting pressure there should be very great. The Bar-

headed Goose thus appears to have declined greatly in a major part of its breeding range.

Breeding colonies in Ladakh do not appear to be endangered though the colony at Chushul has ceased to exist. The Bar-headed goose appears to fall in a twilight zone: whether it will lift itself to the sunshine of greater security or go down the abyss of non-existence, depends largely on how India decides to manage her wetlands and her great rivers.

An unusual nest of Black Bittern (*Ixobrychus flavicollis*) at Cochin - V. Santharam, 10 Leith Castle South St., Santhome, Madras - 600 028: On a recent visit to my native place - Cochin, I happened to notice a nest of a Black bittern on a tree in a friend's garden. The nest was at a height of about 30 feet from the ground, well concealed and made out of twigs, etc. It had the appearance of a crow's nest and in fact, we would have passed it off as a crow's nest if we had not seen the parent bird in the nest with its outstretched neck showing the yellowish pattern on the throat and underparts. Looking through the binoculars and carefully, I noticed some movements in the nest (the twigs were somewhat loosely placed) and to my delight, we saw some chicks (2 or 3) moving about. At times, they peered down at us and we saw that they had some creamish-white down feathers (standing out like bristles of a brush). They were so much unlike their parent which was brownish black (perhaps the female) and slaty grey with yellowish markings on the undersides. Also it remained motionless on seeing us with its neck outstretched. The chicks were at times seen begging for food by making some movements to their motionless parent.

I wrote to Professor K.K. Neelakantan on the sighting and here is what he says:

'I am glad to hear that you were fortunate enough to find an occupied nest of the the Black Bittern in a rather unusual setting.

'Birds of Kerala' (Page 35) has only this to say on the breeding of the Black Bittern:-

'Recorded at Kavasseri in Malabar district (Neelakantan 1956, JBNHS 53: 704-6) and doubtless also breeds elsewhere in Kerala. Season - May/June. Nest - a pad of matted weeds, etc. placed up in tangled reeds, a cane

or screwpine brake, or bamboo clump in a marsh 3 to 5 ft (90 - 150 cm) above the ground'.

In the 'Ornithology of Travancore and Cochin (JBNHS 39:591) it is said 'No records of its nidification in Travancore or Cochin are available'.

Could the pair, whose nest you saw, have laid eggs in a deserted crow's (or some other bird's) nest? I have seen quite a few nests of Black Bittern in Kavasseri, but every one of them was in a pandanus brake on the bank of a river. No nest was more than 7 feet above the ground and almost all were made of creeper stems, pandanus leaves and roots'.

As Professor Neelakantan has rightly pointed out, the bittern seems to have nested in a deserted crows' nest. My sighting of the nest was in Cochin City on 22nd May 1981. Unlike the nests observed by Professor Neelakantan and Dr. Salim Ali, this nest was placed at a greater height and made up of twigs (as far as I could see). It was away from any river or backwaters and was on a tree right in front of a house. (There were 1-2 dried up ponds nearby, though). As I had very little time at my disposal and had to return, I could not continue my observations on this unusual nest.

I am very grateful to Professor Neelakantan for his valuable comments on this subject.

Some Interesting Observations:

1. Booted Eagle (Hieraaetus pennatus) kills a Night Heron (Nycticorax) (nycticorax): During a visit to the Nella-pattu Pelican Sanctuary in Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh, (100 kms north of Madras) on 15.2.81, I happened to witness an exciting sequence of a night heron being attacked, killed and eaten by a Booted hawk-Eagle.

At about 10.35 am, I saw a booted eagle (in light phase) soaring above the tank that constituted a mixed pelicanry, while the nesting waterbirds - Grey Pelicans, openbill storks, white ibis, grey heron, cormorants, little Egrets, Night herons and other species were peacefully carrying on their domestic chores. All of a sudden, the eagle dived steeply from a height of about 50-60 ft. almost vertically. Within a split second, even before I could lower down my binoculars to see what was the quarry, the victim was

secured. The raptor was on the small strip of islet firmly clutching with its talons a bird (which was later confirmed as an adult night heron) by its neck. The impact of the attack had overturned the unsuspecting heron, which was probably injured or engrossed in collecting some food for its young ones in a nearby Barringtonia and it lay on its back showing the greyish white underparts. The eagle had its wings spread out and remained still without any movement.

By this time, all the birds in the neighbourhood took wing and circled, as if in protest, over the predator and the prey. But the raptor remained still and soon the birds gave up and settled down. One or two crows also joined in. But even they gave up soon. I ran to the other part of the bund, where my companion Shri V.J. Rajan was observing birds and soon we returned to the spot to watch further developments. By this time, the eagle had folded back its wings and the prey was also turned so that the black back was visible.

At about 10.45 am, the eagle plucked off a few feathers from the throat but did not feed. Still the prey was held firmly (perhaps in order to strangle it to death). Later in the course of the next fifteen minutes, the victim was dragged by the neck with the right foot. The eagle hopped the distance of a few feet every time followed by a short pause. As the night heron was a heavy bird, perhaps as heavy as the eagle itself, it could not lift it. In this manner, the predator had moved some thirty feet from the original spot and placed its victim under a tree among some grass and reeds. At this position, it was difficult to see the seemingly dead heron. By 11.00 am, we could see the eagle plucking off the feathers and begin its rather early lunch. Till about 11.45, the bird was very busy feeding and later on the observations had to be discontinued.

The prey of this species is said to consist of mainly small mammals and birds, often attacking domestic chicken and pigeons. I don't know if bigger birds (bigger than that of the eagle itself) have been recorded as its food. I would be grateful if someone could enlighten me on this particular aspect.

2. Ashy Swallow-Shrike (Artamus fuscus) on the ground:
I have seen this species on the ground on many occasions. The first such occasion was on 23.3.79, when a pair of these birds were pulling out some tufts of grass probably to line the nest at the open meadow of Adyar Estuary. One bird, having collected a beakful of material headed towards

some palm trees. The other bird remained on the ground for sometime and then flew in another direction. On another occasion, I was observing a finch lark nest that had two chicks in June 80. An ashy swallow shrike alighted on the ground a few yards away. On seeing the bird near their nest, the agitated parents, especially the female vigorously attacked the intruder and forced it to move away.

While the Handbook (Vol.5) says that this species has 'not been recorded actually on the ground, but may do so....', Whistler in the 'Popular Handbook of Indian Birds' asserts that this species never visits the ground. It was interesting to note that the nesting materials includes 'fine grass, roots, fibres and feathers'.

3. Eclipse Plumage in Loten's Sunbird (*Nectarinia lotenia*): Going through the volume 10 of the 'Handbook', I was surprised in noting that the Loten's sunbird has 'no eclipse plumage'. But a footnote adds 'This is however equivocal. Some birds seen and filmed by Dr. Salim Ali in February had eclipse plumage. Refer to Birds of Ceylon by G.M. Henry (Footnote)'.

So I referred to the copy of Henry at the local library and he says 'About August to October, the males assume a plumage like that of the female except that they retain a line of metallic feathers from the chin to the abdomen and the lesser wing coverts are also metallic. From this 'Eclipse' plumage*, they gradually moult into full breeding plumage.

* 'According to Whistler (JBNHS Vol. 38, 1936 P.772), Loten's sunbird has no eclipse plumage. If this be so, the birds seen in female plumage but with a metallic blue and black stripes down the middle of the underparts must be juvenile males moulting into adult plumage. The question requires further examination'. (Breeding season in Ceylon February - May and sometimes later).

I have had the occasion of seeing Loten's sunbird in eclipse plumage many times. The first at Guindy Deer Park on 24.4.78. One of the recent was in May-June to August '80 near my house. In the first two months or so, it was as described above. But on 1.8.80, the underparts were more darker, the dark areas extending somewhat like those of male purple-rumped sunbird. On the latter occasions, the bird was seen as a pair with a female.

I had written to Professor K.K. Neelakantan on the matter and he said that a study on this particular aspect was worthwhile and that the study could be made on captive sunbirds or on colour-ringed specimens in the locality. With limited knowledge on food habits of this species and time, I wonder if it would be possible for me to undertake such a study. But in the meanwhile, I would be grateful to the readers if they could supply any further details on the subject.

4. Mobbing a Snake: On two different instances, I observed the mobbing of a snake by mynahs (*Acridotheres tristis*) and crows (*Corvus splendens* and *C. macrorhynchos*) at Adyar Estuary.

On the latter instance (i.e. on 1.9.80), at about 4.45 pm, walking in the open ground adjoining the estuary, I came across some 20-25 house crows, 10-15 mynahs and 3 jungle crows in an excited condition. The cause for their excitement was the presence of a rat snake (*Ptyas mucosus*), some 3 feet in length crawling on the ground. The birds were attacking the tail and abdomen part of the snake. The jungle crows being the largest birds in the group were bolder and were seen nippin the tip of the tail as the snake crawled past them. If the snake came too close, some of the birds, especially mynahs would rise up in the air. I could observe the mobbing for nearly 3-4 minutes when the unfortunate reptile desperately tried to hide itself moving under the cover of the bushes but never trying to defend itself in any other manner while the opponents seemed to whole-heartedly enjoy themselves pulling its tails and trying to provoke it. At last the rat snake managed to give slip by sliding into a pit covered by dense vegetation. On the earlier occasion (on 11.8.1979), I had observed about a dozen mynahs, 20-25 house crows and a couple of jungle crows around a checkered keelback (?) which lay in an exhausted condition. Unlike the last observation, where the birds remained silent, this group was quite vocal. The house crows also behaved differently on this occasion in that they would rise up in the air vertically to about 6-7 feet and land back. Again the jungle crows were bolder and tried to peck the reptile but would retreat if the snake moved.

Red-Letter Days in Hazaribagh by Ajana:

4th July 1981: While out for an evening stroll with my dog Gina, she put up from some undergrowth beneath tall Teak trees a bird about the size of a pigeon. As the over-all impression was that of a dark bird my first thought was that it must have been a Black Partridge (*Francolinus francolinus*). Fortunately, the bird settled on a low branch of a nearby smaller tree before flying off again and I was able to get a good view of it for some time but the result of this closer look did not confirm the above opinion.

The head appeared black covered with small white spots and the upper back, perhaps the upper chest also dark coloured but covered with longer white spots. The lower part of the chest was creamy-white and had brown flecks on it while lower down still there were no markings at all. It had a dark, slender bill with what seemed a slight curve at the tip and a rather small head set on a slim neck which reminded me of the appearance of a Dove. On my return to the house consultation of Salim Ali's, 'The Book of Indian Birds', suggested that the bird in question had been a Painted Spurrow (*Galloperdix lunulata*).

5th July 1981: Once more out for an early evening stroll, but this time more actively concerned with the collection of mushrooms, Gina and myself disturbed a Stone Curlew (*Burhinus oedipnema*) which ran off along a small pathway with its characteristic hunched, scuttling gait. Then, to my delight, also appeared what yesterday I decided must have been a Painted Spurrow. Leaning forward slightly as it ran it had a lanky look about it and while making off into thicker undergrowth it emitted a subdued ducking noise similar to that made by a domestic hen when slightly startled. As it moved quickly I was unable to make out any spurs but the incident took place about twenty-five yards away from the site of the first viewing.

6th July 1981: Having just finished breakfast I decided to go out in order to track down a Woodpecker whose tapping sound I could hear coming from behind the house. However most thoughts of Woodpeckers were forgotten, most probably it would have been a yellow fronted Pied or Mahratte Woodpecker (*Picoides maharattensis*), when I noticed a strange type of Drongo sitting on one of the Eucalyptus trees. Its tail had four distinct points and of this I'm quite sure because, later on, it flew down on to some telegraph wires where it raised its wings for preening purposes and the tail still appeared as before.

Moments later the bird was joined by a slightly larger Drongo the tail of which being dissimilar and also unusual. This one ended in a fork but half the inside tips of each point were either white or composed of very fine, spaced-out feathers.

The first bird I took to be a female as the second one twice flew off and on its return, presumably with something in its beak, made feeding gestures towards the former.

Although never at such close quarters, these Drongo-type birds I also saw last year on a few occasions during August and September even noting on the 31st August, 1980 that their call was of a sustained not unpleasant whistling variety. Now, as then, I am puzzled as to what they actually are and look forward to some enlightenment on the subject.



Female



Male

Siberian Cranes discovered in Iran and China: From The International Council for Bird Preservation Newsletter: With the number of Siberian Cranes (*Grus leucogeranus*) wintering at the Keoladeo Ghana Sanctuary in India down to 34 during the winter of 1980-81, locating and determining the size of other populations has become all the more urgent. Siberian Cranes formerly wintered in significant numbers along the Caspian lowlands of northern Iran, but repeated surveys in recent decades indicated that the species was extirpated. In the spring of 1978, however, a relict group of nine Siberian Cranes was found wintering in a wetland at the heart of a duck trapping complex near the village of Feredunknar, along the southeast shore of the Caspian. During the past winter the number of cranes present there was up to 16, according to Mr. Mohammed Reza Vazarie of the Iran Department of the Environment, who reported the

figure to Dr. George Archibald, Chairman of the ICBP Crane Working Group.

From China Dr. Archibald has recently learned that this year approximately one hundred Siberian Cranes were found wintering near the Yangtze River in northern Jiangxi Province. The birds, whose wintering area was not previously known, were discovered by Mr. Fu-chang Chou, an ornithologist with the Institute of Zoology in Beijing who had searched for the cranes each winter since 1977.

The total known population is now 150, 40 percent less than the 250 previously estimated by the International Crane Foundation. There remains the hope that other wintering areas in China will be located.

Correspondence

Nests of Weaver Birds on Telegraph wires by Kamala Venkataramani. 13-A. Everest, Anushakhinagar, Bombay 400094: It is usually said and reported that the weaver birds build their nests in trees especially in palm trees. But to my surprise I saw the nests made in telegraphic wires in 2 places while I was on a tour of south India by bus. The first place was about 15 km from Salem (a place called Mallore) when I saw a dozen of them (on the right side) while going to Salem from Namakkal. The second place was about 1 km from Vriddachalam on the Tozhudur Vriddachalam Road. (On the left side while going to Vriddachalam). I would like to know whether this is a common feature. If so, what kind of weaver bird one can expect in these nests? Can readers of Newsletter throw some light on this.

A reply to Lavkumar Khacher regarding Chestnut headed bee-eater by P.S. Thakker: This is in reference to the 'comments on the Newsletter' by Shri Lavkumar Khacher, NFBW February 1981. He has pointed out while commenting on Chestnut headed bee-eater, '.... the Green Bee-eater often shows a very coppery glint on the head seen at certain angles, and can be confused for the current favourite. The latter lacks the elongated central tail pins, but these can be broken or frayed in the Green Bee-eater'. Going ahead he writes, 'In our part of the country we might be very lucky to get another species to confuse us. The European Bee-eater. This also has a Chestnutish head. Both this and the Chestnut headed have yellow throats contra green or blue of the Green Bee-eater'.

May I point out some loopholes here? The Green Bee-eater can confuse us when seen at certain angles. Agreed! But then question comes of the yellow throat! I think for the yellow colour there cannot be any confusion. Secondly, the elongated central tail pins can be broken or frayed in one or two birds but it cannot be easily found in all four or five birds.

Again he writes about European Bee-eater for yellow throat. Then the problem is of the projected central tail pins! Is it possible for all the birds that they might have met with an accident? And as a result of the accident, the elongated central tail pins might have broken or frayed of all the birds! Surely they were birds, not migratory warriors!

I agree with the views of Shri Khachar that there should be some proof to corroborate. But I think it is not possible for a person to have a camera or a witness at each and every place and at every moment.

Editor: Zafar Futehally

Dodda Gubbi Post, Via Vidyanagar, Bangalore - 562 134

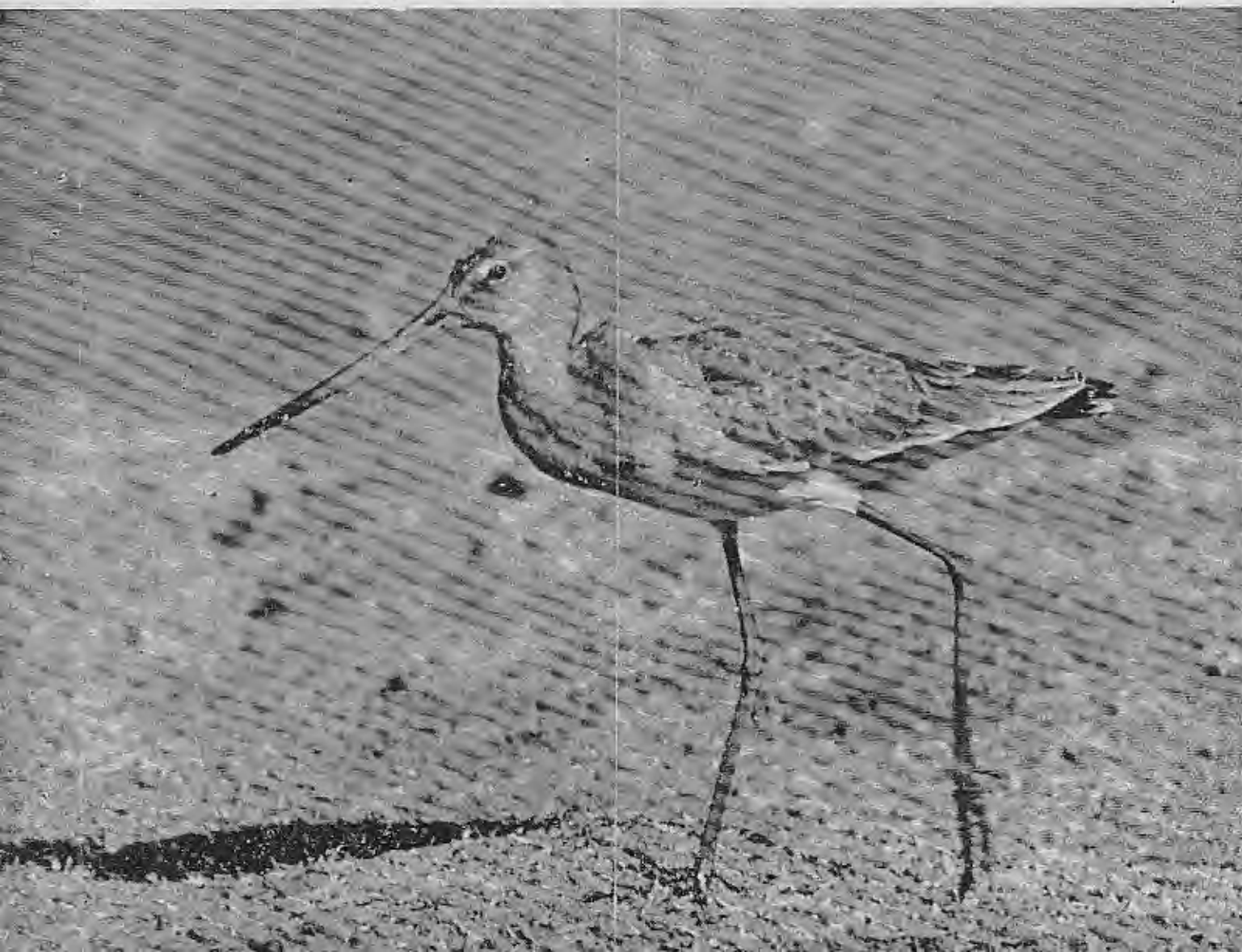
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Cover Picture: Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Photo by: E. Hanumantha Rao

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

VOL. XXI NO. 12 DEC. 1981



SUBSCRIPTION FOR 1982
WILL BE APPRECIATED. THOSE
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Editor

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NEWSLETTER
FOR BIRDPWATCHERS

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feeding on the saw-scaled viper Echis carinatus by
B.Venugopal.

Stop Press from Oryx.

Editorial

Captive Breeding of endangered birds: There have been several successful operations regarding captive breeding of birds. Everyone has heard of the Nene Goose bred by Peter Scott at Slimbridge and released into its native habitat in Hawaii. Our Whitewinged Wood-duck is also doing well in Slimbridge and it is to be hoped that the rain forests of Assam will remain to receive the birds when a sufficient number has been bred. Prakash Gole, who studied the problems of captive breeding in America recently, has submitted a project to WWF, India for breeding the Blacknecked crane. This is a difficult operation involving among other things the rapid transfer of eggs taken in Ladakh to the incubators whenever they are placed.

Another project by the well known falconer S.M.Osman (11-D/10 circular road, Dehra Dun, UP) concerns the captive breeding of Shaheen Falcons (*Falco peregrinator*). Osman has succeeded in acquiring a female which has been named Kali Rani, but a tiercel (male) has not yet been found. Can any of our readers help in acquiring one. While waiting for the male, Osman has acquired 'first hand experience regarding the Shaheens behaviour, including its instinct and learning ability, response to reproductive cycle, social behaviour towards human beings, as well as its physiology'.

Madhav Gadgil Prize for study of Koels: There has been only one entry and a fairly good one by H.P. Patnaik which was published in the September-October issue and on behalf of the Newsletter I am happy to award the prize of Rs.100/- to him. I hope, however, that some more accounts of these birds will come in next year. Readers may recall the note in the March-April issue about Koels in the Maldives. With the destruction of crows the Koels have no foster parents and their future will be endangered.

The K.K.Surendran Prize for birdwatching at night: No candidates have 'applied' for this nocturnal undertaking, so the prize money of Rs.100/- is retained for 1982. As I remarked earlier, owls, night-jars, and night-herons are some of the birds which can be written about.

Subscriptions for 1982: I have not yet cashed the subscriptions which have been acknowledged.

Only a dozen have been received. Will all of you please 'expedite' your remittance so that we can commence the next year on a sound basis. Costs are soaring and I can only fight inflation by having combined issues occasionally, and limiting the pages every month. I would like to thank our advertisers, Vickers Sperry of India Ltd., and the Karnataka Government for their support.

=====

A Census in 1982? : I wonder whether we can embark on this ambitious project next year. The set of maps produced by the Tamilnad Printers and Traders Pvt.Ltd., from their India School Atlas could be used for establishing a grid of 100 km square within which members could maintain their records. The maps are in the scale of 1:6 million or 1 cm = 60 km i.e. 100 km is represented by 1.66 cm. The maps have squares of 2° Lat. x 2° Long printed on them and each square can be conveniently referred to by a combination of the letter appearing in the north and south margins and the number appearing in east and west margins, as for instance, square B3.

Six maps cover the whole area of the country. The maps are only to help in identifying areas where participants would like to study the breeding birds and keep a list of the species, the relevant information about nesting and breeding, and a census of the birds that they are able to see. If there is a reasonable project of bird-watchers throughout the country, we may be able to arrive at useful information. It will also be interesting for those participating in the census to interact with others who are doing the survey a few km away. Sometimes there is a very significant change in breeding species between one area and another not too far away.

=====

The Bird Watchers Digest: A very interesting new publication which acts as a clearing house for information on birds in general from many sources is the Bird Watchers Digest, Box 110, Marietta, Ohio 45750 'An Evolutionary Tale' is reproduced in this issue from the July/August 1981 number.

=====

The Endangered Birds of Bangladesh by Mr. M. A. Reza Khan
Dept. of Zoology, University of Dacca, Dacca-2, Bangladesh:
 Inspite of the Bangladesh Wildlife (Preservation) Act, 1973, which bans trapping, shooting and trading of most species of birds and other wildlife birds are regularly killed, trapped and sold in the markets. This, and the habitat destruction followed by rapid conversion of forests and marshy areas into either agricultural plots or human habitation, lumber poaching, clearing of undergrowth and removal of jungle from the countryside is fast reducing the population of many species of birds, some of which are almost on the brink of extinction.

Bangladesh, located between $20^{\circ}34'$ to $26^{\circ}38'$ N. and $88^{\circ}01'$ to $92^{\circ}40'$ E has an area of about 142, 776 sq.km. including about 21,950 sq.km. of land having some sort of forest, 8300 sq.km. of rivers, canals and streams, 1828 sq.km. of brackish water, 764 sq.km. of ponds and tanks, 2930 sq.km. of wetlands - locally called beels, baors and haors and 906 sq.km. of artificial lakes; the country supports some 566 species of birds (Khan, Checklist of Wildlife of Bangladesh, in press). Of these, roughly 33.5 percent are migratory and 66.5 percent resident, 322 species are non-passerine and 244 are passerine.

IUCN's (International Union of Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) Red Data Book on Birds, prepared by the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP, 1979), rated Whitewinged Wood Duck (Cairina scutulata), Peregrine Falcon (Falco peregrinus), Burmese peafowl (Pavo muticus), Spotted Green Shank (Tringa guttifer) and Asian Dowitcher (Limnodromus semipalmatus) as Endangered. Unfortunately it has mentioned only three species, out of the above, as present in Bangladesh, although the other two species have been included under the list of the birds of the neighbouring countries. The Burmese Peafowl still occurs in the Evergreen forests of the Chittagong Hill Tracts District. Recently (23.4.1981) I have seen two Asian Dowitchers on the sandbars (bars) of Padma River, near Rajshahi town where I was prospecting the breeding grounds of the Gharial.

Schedule I of CITES (Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) includes the following avifauna, which occur in Bangladesh, White Stork (Ciconia ciconia), Nakta/Comb Duck (Sarkid-lornis melanotos), Imperial Eagle (Aquila heliaca), Whitewinged Wood Duck, Burmese Peafowl, Bengal Florican

(Eupodotis bengalensis), and Spotted Green Shank. Schedule II includes Peacock-Pheasant (Polypelctron bicalcaratum) which is present in the evergreen forests of Chittagong and Sylhet.

Other than the above, Bangladesh has some more species which may be considered endangered. I am furnishing the list of bird species which I consider to be endangered in Bangladesh.

1. Podiceps cristatus, Great Crested Grebe
2. Pelicanus aurocrotalus, White/Rosy Pelican
3. Pelicanus philippensis, Grey Pelican
4. Phalacrocorax fuscicollis, Indian Shag
5. Ardea imperialis, Great Whitebellied Heron
6. Ardea goliath, Goliath/Giant Heron
7. Ibis leucocephalus, Painted Stork
8. Ciconia episcopus, Whitenecked Stork
9. Ciconia ciconia, White Stork
10. Xenornynchus asiaticus, Blacknecked Stork
11. Leptoptilos dubius, Greater Adjutant Stork
12. Leptoptilos javanicus, Lesser Adjutant,
13. Pseudibis papillosa, Black Ibis
14. Plegadis falcinellus, Glossy Ibis
15. Platalea leucorodia, Spoonbill
16. Phoenicurus roseus, Common Flamingo
17. Anser fabialis, Bean/Pinkfooted Goose
18. Anser anser, Greylag Goose
19. Anas angustirostris, Marbled Teal
20. Anas formosa, Baikal Teal
21. Anas falcata, Falcated Teal
22. Anas penelope, Wigeon
23. Anas platyrhynchos, Shoveller
24. Sarkidiornis melanotos, Nakta/Comb Duck
25. Cairina scutulata, Whitewinged Wood Duck, 30-40 ducks in Kassalong Reserve, evergreen forest, Chittagong Hill Tracts District; habitat destruction lack of nesting trees, capturing of ducklings by the tribal chakmas and occasional hunting leading the species to extinction.
26. Aviceda jerdoni, Jerdon's Baza
27. Lophotriorchis kienerii, Rufousbellied Hawk-Eagle
28. Aquila heliaca, Imperial Eagle
29. Aquila clanga, Greater Spotted Eagle
30. Aquila pomarina, Lesser Spotted Eagle
31. Ictinaetus malayensis, Black Eagle
32. Haliaeetus leucogaster, Ringtailed/Pallas's Fishing Eagle

33. Trogos calvus, King Vulture,
34. Aegyptius monachus, Cinereus Vulture, no recent sightings
35. Gyps indicus, Longbilled Vulture
36. Gyps bengalensis, Whitebacked Vulture, it was common
two decades back, now disappearing fast.
37. Circaetus fallicus, Short-toed Eagle
38. Falco biarmicus, Lager Falcon
39. Falco peregrinus, Peregrine Falcon, occasionally seen,
Dacca,
40. Francolinus francolinus, Black Partridge
41. Francolinus pondicerianus, Grey Partridge
42. Francolinus gularis
43. Lophura leucomelana, Blackbreasted Kalij-Pheasant
44. Polyplectron bicalcaratum, Peacock-Pheasant
45. Pavo cristatus, Common Peafowl
46. Pavo muticus, Burmese Peafowl
47. Grus antigone, Sarus Crane
48. Anthropoides virgo, Demoiselle Crane
49. Heliopais personata, Masked Pintout
50. Eupodotis bengalensis, Bengal Florican, no recent
sight record, possibly extinct
CITES-I.
51. Tringa guttifer, Spotted Green Sandpiper
52. Limnodromus semipalmatus, Asian Dowitcher/Snipebilled
Godwit
53. Capella solitaria, Solitary Snipe
54. Rhynchops albigollis, Indian skimmer
55. Ducula badia, Imperial Pigeon
56. Psittacula finschii, Slatyheaded Parakeet
57. Clamator coromandus, Redwinged Crested Cuckoo
58. Tyto capensis, Grass
59. Phodilus badius, Sikkim Bay Owl
60. Batrachostomus hodgsoni, Hodgson's Frogmouth
61. Nyctiornis athertoni, Bluebearded Bee-eater
62. Eurystomus orientalis, Broadbilled Roller
63. Buceros bicornis, Great Pied Hornbill

Among passerine birds only the Hill Myna or Grackle (Gracula religiosa) is really facing extinction because of pet trade and to some extent due to the lack of softwood trees suitable for its nesting.

All species of birds occurring in Bangladesh are showing a tendency of population decline either because of mass-scale habitat destruction or killing of the adult birds for food. As a group, both the diurnal and nocturnal, birds of prey populations are declining faster than other groups. Groups such as the crows, sparrows, bayas, parakeets and mynas; also Blue Rock Pigeon, having

wide ecological tolerances, are no doubt flourishing in the rapidly urbanised areas as well as in the villages.

Distribution of some birds in Rajasthan: By Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma, 54, Dhuleshwar Garden, Jaipur- 302001:
Brown Crake (Amaurornis akool): Near about Jaipur at suitable localities, whenever I heard a bird skulking in reed-beds, I dismissed it as either a Whitebreasted Waterhen or Indian Moorhen, until I saw a bird in the open which neither had white under tail-coverts nor breast as white as that of a Whitebreasted Waterhen. It's upper parts were dark brownish and underparts ashy-grey which turned darker posteriorly. There was no colour difference between the forehead and the top of its head. This bird is occasionally seen near about Jaipur at suitable places. At Sariska I have seen this bird which is undoubtedly a brown Crake.

In his Handbook (Vol.2, p.167) Salim Ali has not included Rajasthan; while describing the distribution of the Brown Crake. In the checklist of the Birds of Delhi, Agra and Bharatpur by Humayun Abdulali and J.D. Pandey it is mentioned as absent at Bharatpur and uncommon at Delhi. High Whistler did not include this bird in 'The ornithological survey of Jodhpur State' (JBNHS, Sept. 1938). Although I have not seen Adam's work on the birds of Sambhur lake published in Stray Feathers, I presume that it was not noted there. Sambhur lake lies on the eastern boundary of the former Jodhpur state and Whistler has commented on the study of previous workers in his paper.

Little Bittern (Ixobrychus minutus): On 24.1.81 at about 14.30 hours I strolled to a waterhole about 1 km. from the Sariska Rest House. On a submerged dried branch sat a heron slightly smaller than a Pond Heron but with its crown and occiput black; back, blackish grey, and underparts ashy-grey. It had no white on the crown.

Although the light was poor, I think it had no green on it's upper parts. I identified it as a male Little Bittern.

Salim Ali's Handbook (Vol.2, p.83) describes its distribution as 'West Pakistan (sind) and Northern India (Nepal, U.P.), east to Assam(Cachar-Baker).....'.

Humayun Abdualali and J.D. Pandey mention it as absent at Bharatpur and uncommon in Delhi.

Painted Spur Fowl (Gallopardix lunulata): While describing the distribution of Painted Spurfowl in Handbook (Vol.2, P.70) Salim Ali says '....Not in Rajasthan... Range largely overlaps and/or jigsaws confusingly with that of Gallopardix spadicea....' R.S. Dharmakumarsinhji and K.S. Lavkumar in their book 'Sixty Indian Birds' on page 70 describe observing this bird, while climbing a hill in Ranthamlor Tiger Reserve and a photograph taken there also appears in this book.

At Sariska Tiger Reserve, I observed this bird in mixed forests of Dhok (Anogeissus pendula) and Bamboo (Dendrocalanus strictus) along the dry nullahs in the ravines.

Pied Myna (Sturnus contra): In the Book of Indian Birds It's distribution is described as 'India east of a line from Ambala (Haryana) to Hyderabad and Masulipatam (Andhra)'. This line goes about 100 miles east of Jaipur. I have observed this bird occasionally at Jaipur near some ponds though never in the city. At Alwar which is about 40 miles west of the above line, it is very common everywhere including the city. I couldn't find any reason for its absence in Jaipur City.

A Day at Nalsarovar water bird Sanctuary. By S. Gauriar, Senior Supdt., of Post Offices, Anand Division, Gujarat 388001: Nalsarovar lake, a shallow body of water, stretching over several sq.kms. is only 65 kims. away from Ahmedabad, via. Sanand, connected by a motorable road. The water is nowhere very deep and is interspersed with small squelchy patches of land jutting out of the water and thereby providing excellent resting site for myriads of water birds. The lake is also richly infested with weeds, like, Eleocharis sp., Cyperus sp., Eichhornes crassipus, Species of Nymphaea and Nelumbium and so on. The weeds, insects and tiny fishes and crustaceans provide food for the birds.

I visited the sanctuary in late winter this year, just the proper time for a visit as scores of migratory water birds ranging from snipe to flamingoes can be seen during the winter months. The wading of ducks, the spatter of coots, the hovering of the brown headed gulls,

the squeal of the storks and the dabble of the elegant flamingoes - all present a phenomenon pulsating with life and energy and is a treat to bird watchers.

The largest flocks of birds that I saw were of coot, avocet, blackwinged stilt, pintail, wigeon, gadwall, mallard and shoveller, common teal, lesser whistling teal, gargany, demoiselle crane, rosy pelican, brown headed gulls and flamingoes.

Any description of the birds of the sanctuary would be incomplete if I do not mention the innumerable pipits, several species of wagtails, shrikes and rosy pastors. All of these, can be seen in large numbers around the lake. However, cormorants, which are common elsewhere in similar setting, were conspicuous by their absence.

The annexure shows the list of only prominent species of birds, arranged familywise. The commonplace birds have been omitted from the list.

ANNEXURE

PODICIPITIFORMES

i. Little Grebe or Dabchick: (Podiceps ruficollis)

PELICANIDAE

i. Rosy pelican : (Pelicanus species)

ARDEIDAE

i. Pond heron : (Ardeola grayii)

ii. Little egret : (Egretta garzetta)

iii. Cattle egret : (Bubulcus ibis)

CICONIIDAE

i. Black necked stork : (Xenorhynchus asiaticus)

ii. White stork : (Ciconia ciconia)

iii. White necked stork : (C. eniscomus)

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

i. Black Ibis : (Pseudibis papillosa)

ii. White Ibis : (Threskiornis melanocephala)

PHOENICOPTERIDAE

i. Flamingo : (Phoenicopterus roseus)

ANATIDAE

i. Mallard : (Anas platyrhynchos)

ii. Pintail : (A. acuta)

iii. Wigeon : (A. penelope)

iv. Gadwall : (A. strepera)

v. Shoveller : (A. clypeata)

vi. Common teal : (A. crecca)

vii. Gargany or blue winged teal : (A. querquedula)

viii. Lesser whistling teal : (Dendrocygna javanica)

GRUIDAE

- i. Demoiselle crane : (Anthropoides virgo)
- ii. Sarus crane : (Grus antigone)

RALLIDAE

- i. Coot : (Fulica atra)

JACANIDAE

- i. Pheasant tailed Jacana : (Hydrophasianus chirurgus)
- ii. Bronze winged jacana : (Metopidius indicus)

CHARADRIDAE

- i. Little ringed plover : (Charadrius dubius)
- ii. Redwattled lapwing : (Vanellus indicus)
- iii. Yellow wattled lapwing: (V. malabaricus)

SCOLOPACIDAE

- i. Wood or spotted sandpiper: (Tringa glariola)
- ii. Little stint : (Calidris minutus)
- iii. Common or fantail snip: (Capella gallinago)

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

- i. Avocet : (Recurvirostra avosetta)
- ii. Black winged stilt : (Himantopus himantopus)

LARIDAE

- i. Brown headed gull : (Larus brunnicephalus)
- ii. River tern : (Sterna aurantia)

Sparrows in Chancery(From the London Times): The dusky sparrow, a species of the North American sea board is reported to be down to its last five individuals - or was at the last count, for sparrows are here today and gone tomorrow. There may be a handful more in the wild, but their marshy habitat has been largely reclaimed for condominiums, and the odds are against it. The days have gone in the United States when vast hydro-electric programmes could be halted at a suggestion that they might impair the habitat of a rare breed of minnow. But even in the Reagan era, Americans take ornithology seriously. A grant of \$ 46,000 has been made to keep the birds in carefully-monitored captivity, and a nature reserve is planned for their hoped-for descendants, at a cost of \$ 2½m. Inflation has left its mark since the days when two sparrows were sold for a penny.

It is quite possible to bring a bird back from the verge of extinction. The Hawaiian goose, for instance, was rescued by the Severn Wildfowl Trust, and is now re-established in Hawaii several thousand strong. The gene-pool of any species, irreplaceable and potentially immortal, intrinsically deserves respect. Any species may possess qualities which we may stand in need of one

day. The sciencefiction scenario is familiar: a hitherto unrecorded strain of St.Vitus's Dance is laying whole continents waste; then, in the deathly hush of a hospital where every living thing has succumbed (the very cockroaches exhausted), the handsome young researcher hears the merry chirrup of a dusky sparrow.....

But those seeking to save the dusky sparrow's genes face an obstacle that the Slimbridge goose-breeders did not. All five of the birds are male. But the nation which put a man on the moon is hardly likely to despair because of a minor setback like that. Two ways out of the difficulty are in sight, and since this is America, the choice between them is likely to be settled by litigation - right up to the Supreme Court, no doubt, if the birds live that long.

It would be possible to cross the five with related sparrows like the Cape Sable, breeding their descendants so as to bring out duskiness at the expense of sabliness. (The fact that interbreeding is possible suggests that the dusky is not a species, but a race, hardly warranting such expensive custody in any case). But government attorneys argue that crossing would compromise the integrity of the stock. They forbid miscegenation, and rely on the remote chance of a female turning up in the wild. So the birds mope in luxury without mates. If the attorneys catch St.Vitus's Dance when the time comes, they will have no one but themselves to blame.

They bear a heavy vicarious responsibility, it is true. The last representatives of a species conduct their dynastic affairs under a heavier shadow of responsibility than any king or emperor. Sparrows take such matters notoriously lightly - hence the need for lawyers and endowments. But there is a cautionary tale for the attorneys in D.J. Enright's poem 'The Quagga'. In the 1860s London Zoo possessed a male and a female quagga, a kind of dusky zebra, by then probably extinct in the wild. The future of the species depended on these two. But the lugubrious interest of savants and keepers oppressed them with a sense of their responsibilities. At last one afternoon the male shook off his lethargy, and reared and snorted:

He was Adam: there was Eve.
Gallopig over to her, his
head flung back,
He stumbled, and broke a leg,
and had to be shot.

Animal Biomass in native forest of the Orongorongo Valley, Wellington. By R.E. Brockie and Abdul Moeed, Ecology Div. DSIR, Private Bag, Lower Hutt: As part of a continuing ecosystem study, a succession of workers has measured the abundance of several animal groups in podocarp-broadleaf forest of the Orongorongo Valley. Annual litterfall was also measured and estimates made of above-ground plant biomass.

Our forest produces more litter than most European deciduous forests and the fall of litter is more evenly distributed throughout the year. Most tropical rainforests produce more litter than the Orongorongo forest. European oak forests and the local podocarp-broadleaf forests contain about equal above-ground biomass.

Results of studies on animal abundance were converted to kg body weight per hectare (Table 1).

Table 1: Animal biomass in podocarp-broadleaf forest, Orongorongo Valley.

Taxonomic group	Date	Mean biomass (kg/ha)
Earthworms ¹	1980	332.0
Arthropods ¹	1975-	145.7
Reptiles and amphibians	-	infinitesimal
Birds	1969-70	0.583
Brush-tail possums	1980	18.6
Goats	1966-76 ²	14.8
Ship rats	1966-68	0.225
Mice	1977-78	0.026
Cats	1970-73	0.026
Stoats	1970-75	0.005
Total mammals ³		33.7

Notes:

¹Includes Collembola, beetles, mites, spiders, centipedes, millipedes, isopods and amphipods only. Only ground-dwelling species have been sampled.

²Most goats shot out in 1976.

³Excludes deer and pigs, which occur only in low numbers.

Earthworms constitute by far the largest biomass in the community and would once have been exploited as

a food source by kiwis, wekas and robins. With the loss of these species from the Orongorongo forest, this food source remains almost unexploited by vertebrates, with the exception of introduced blackbirds and song thrushes. The ground-dwelling arthropod fauna is substantial and diverse and carries a greater biomass in the lowland podocarp-broadleaf forest of the Orongorongo Valley than in several tropical rain forests of the world.

The biomass of birds in the Valley is similar to that found in podocarp-broadleaf forests of the South and Stewart Islands and in several Japanese and United States forests, but it does not approach the average 1.5 kg/ha found in many European forests, nor the biomass of forest birds on Kapiti Island which is calculated to be 4-10 times greater. Mammalian predators probably hold the Orongorongo Valley birds to such low numbers.

The biomass of mammals is high by world standards; indeed, it is difficult to find any other forest supporting such a biomass of leaf-eating mammals. The biomass of brush-tailed possums, both in the Orongorongo Valley and in other similar forests, is cause for alarm. The forest cannot support this biomass of possums without its floristic composition and structure being transformed.

An Evolutionary Tale by William L. Wylie. Professor in the College of Agriculture and Forestry, West Virginia University:
In many people's minds the word evolution, if not a dirty word, is one which conjures up thoughts and ideas that are not fully understood. With that thought in mind, I would like briefly to discuss evolution and speciation in relation to birds.

Evolution simply means change, and of course, in living creatures, change comes through reproduction. In every case of sexual reproduction two sets of chromosomes, containing many genes, join to form a new set within the offspring. The genes are, in effect, charged with reproducing every feature of the parents. Occasionally some animals carry a mutation that can be passed on to the next generation. Mutations occur frequently in birds but normally do not show, so far are not noticed by us and probably have little or no effect on the birds themselves. These differences could show up as slight variations in colour, light patches, or have something to do with behaviour, to name a few.

In some cases, however, mutations may produce characteristics which provide offspring with distinct advantages over parents. These advantages or 'improvements' may involve the securing of food, reproduction, or the avoiding of enemies. The characteristics leading to such improvements would normally be carried over into successive generations. If, on the other hand, the changes produce a disadvantage within the environment, the bird will perish with no chance to pass on these adverse characteristics.

Let us now take a hypothetical example using the common dark-eyed junco. I would imagine that most readers of BWD know the junco, a small slate-gray bird with a white breast and white outer tail feathers. Let us now assume that a million years ago or so (the time-span is not important), juncos were without white outer tail feathers, their entire backs and tails slaty gray. They were preyed upon then, as they are now, by sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, and by some small predatory mammals such as weasels and mink.

Now suppose that in a breeding pair of juncos, something happens during the gene transfer and the pair produces a nest of fledglings with white outer tail feathers. In such a case, the young carrying this mutation would have a definite advantage in the environment over their parents. The locus of a predatory animal in pursuit of one of these mutants would be on the white outer tail feathers, a non-lethal part of the bird, and not on the body of the bird itself. The bird would escape with a few tail feathers lost, and these would be quickly replaced.

Since this mutation has created an advantage for those birds possessing the white tail feathers, they live to pass this gene on to successive generations. We now have two types of juncos co-existing, all dark backed birds and those with the white outer tail feathers. Because the new mutants are better able to escape predation, they increase in numbers while the all dark-tailed birds decrease. Eventually the white-tailed birds replace the dark-tailed birds, and we have the present dark-eyed junco that we know so well today. This is evolution in action.

Thinking of the birds that you know that have white outer tail feathers, are not most of them birds that fly up from the ground? The attention of the predator is focused on the white, while the bird escapes, virtually unharmed.

In prairie or tundra-nesting species such as longspurs, pipits, and meadowlarks, the white in the tail may serve a secondary function. Since there are normally no elevated perches from which these birds can sing during courtship, they are well known for singing on the wing, thereby making themselves and their song more obvious in their attempt to attract and hold a mate. The white in the tail adds to this visibility and may insure the attraction of a mate.

Consider then, that present birds are the results of the evolutionary process which is continuously fine-tuning the various species to fit precisely into their environment.

Correspondence

Sirkeer Cuckoo by Anuradha Singh, A-33 Miranda House, Hostel, Delhi University, Delhi 110007: I furnish below further details of my observations on sirkeer cuckoos, which you had asked for in your letter dated 5.8.81.

I made these observations in my house in Izatnagar, Bareilly District (U.P.) on the campus of the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, in July 1980.

A flock of these birds visit us each monsoon and their arrival more or less coincides with mine, when I'm home for vacations from Delhi University, where I study. In our large, wild and rambling ~~fr~~ ^{fr} ~~are~~ garden they have ample cover in which to skulk about. Yet, they are rather wide-ranging birds and are given to frequenting a very large (some 4 hectares) fallow field behind our house.

Normally they skulk among the rose bushes or the Pithecellobium hedge, or beneath the denser foliage of Tabernaemontana and Bougainvillea, but the comic display was executed in the open though in the vicinity of cover. On one occasion they called to each other from the branches of a mango tree and a Ficus glomerata.

When I saw the displays the flock had broken up and a pair had taken up residence in our compound. I don't remember whether the other members of the flock continued to haunt the vicinity of our compound or had left altogether. (I have omitted to record it in my notes, unfortunately).

The display is long, and after a while begins to tax the observers' patience, somewhat. I saw it spread over two consecutive days and then too, I was unable to see them actually mating in spite of long vigils. Therefore, it was also impossible to tell the male and female apart, except that one showed a greater tendency to follow the other around.

This low effectiveness of the display, if one can call it that, involving a high expenditure of energy, with relatively low 'returns' or success, combined with the elemental and unelaborated nature of the display, is again suggestive of primitiveness.

One may conjecture that other taxa of birds went on to achieve greater behavioural sophistication, by elaboration on this 'basic plan', to give rise to the enormous diversity, complexity and even ingenuity of display that we witness in the bird world today.

The sirkeer cuckoo and the likes of it, may have retained their elementary and simple display, because the environment did not place sufficient selection pressures on them, to require them to 'change or die'. In this context, it will be interesting to examine the worldwide distribution of the sirkeer cuckoo and its closest relatives. I would like to know if this taxon is endemic to the Indian sub-continent or not or otherwise how far its range extends. It would be illuminating to know more about its nesting habits. Which are its closest relatives?

From the frequency with which our pair visited a *Bougainvillea* thicket we suspected that they had a nest there (on the ground), but we have never could locate it. Further studies were cut short by our return to the University for the next session.

I hope someone can make something out of all this.

Editors note: The Genus *TACCOCUA* has only one species though there are three forms, and as far as I can make out from references it is confined to India. The Handbook Vol.III p.234 says: 'Courtship display consists of a ludicrous repeated bowing (or bobbing) by one bird of a pair (in one case verified as female) before the otherat other times both birds partake in these antics with equal enthusiasm....'. It is non-parasitic and the nest consists of an untidy saucer of twigs lined with green leaves, normally between 2 to 3 metres from the ground.

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Birdwatching at Sheelaj heronary. by P.S. Thakker:

In June 1978 Mr.M.K.Subbarao, former Asst. Education Officer Nature Clubs of India, WWF-I, and myself were in search of some interesting places for educational excursions for the Nature Clubs. After wandering at many places one day we noticed a large mixed heronary on an island in the village tank of Sheelaj.

When we saw openbilled storks we got confused - their identity with White storks. But it was too early in the season to see the migratory white storks.

After this instance the place became a pilgrimage for the bird watchers of the city and other ornithologists also visited the place. (Y.H. Chhaya Newsletter for Birdwatchers April 1980).

I have been visiting this area quite often during the last three years. In the beginning there were five Babul trees (Acacia arabica) and one young Sami tree (Prosopis spicigera) on the island in the tank. However the nests of various freshwater birds were only on the Babul trees. The Sami tree did not have even a single nest on it, and till today the situation is the same.

The heronary seems active only during June to December, and from January to May one is unable to find any stork or Ibis. The birds generally encountered during the breeding season are:

Openbilled storks,
White Ibis, Painted Storks
and Little egrets.

Besides, I have observed white necked stork in the month of September '80 in the tank and a group of Nakta in the water near the island in October 1980.

On 14th September 1980 I witnessed a pair of pied crested cuckoos on the babul trees around the tank. Moreover for the first time, on 3rd May 1981, the presence of Night herons at the heronary was noticed.

Recently, I visited the heronary on 20th May '81 with Mr.B.M.Parasharya. The heronary was reduced in strength because one Babul tree was cut down. There were nests on the other three Babul trees each having 65-70 nests.

This spot was supposed to be developed by WWF-India, North Gujarat Branch (U.H.Chhaya, NLBW April, 1980). However it was distressing to find that there was not a single sign of development in the form of any tree or sapling or any picture or sign board of the birds.

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Pellet casting by Bee-eaters by V.Santharam, 10, Leith Castle South St., Santhome, Madras 600028: I was under the impression that pellet casting was strictly restricted to the raptors and owls. So I was very surprised on 21st August, 1981 when the bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*) that I was watching at Adyar Estuary for quite sometime suddenly open its mouth as if it was yawning and bring out a pellet and dropped down to the ground. I later examined the pellet and found it to be an elongated one, black in colour, consisting of some material which I could not identify but could have been some insect wings and other hard indigestible items. The size of the pellet was about that of a small peanut.

When this was mentioned to Prof.K.K.Neelakantan, he wrote back the following: 'I have seen the common Myna and the Koel bringing up undigested matter and casting it out through the mouth. Also the Green sandpiper and the common sandpiper. Pellet casting is perhaps much more widespread than the books suggest:

I would be glad if any one could throw further light on this matter.

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The Bank Myna (*Acridotheres cinerascens*) and King Crow (*Dicrurus assimilis*) preying upon the cricket *Acheta* (Orthoptera:Cryllidae): By R.N. Bhargava. Zoological Survey of India, Pata B Road, Jodhpur: During an intensive survey of crickets in and around Asop village ca. 75 km N. of Jodhpur on 3rd July, 1981 the Bank Myna and King Crow were frequently observed and the former outnumbered the latter. Interestingly, Bank Mynas were found to be scarce or totally absent in places within a few kilometers of this village. Cricket were collected from crevices of cracked mud in a dry ephemeral pond whose excavation by villagers to increase the water storage capacity was in progress. Since crickets took shelter deep in crevices to tide over extreme heat of the day, during digging a good number of them came out, hopped and flew in all directions. The active pursuit

of the prey by the hunters was observed both on the ground and in the air. King Crows either perched quietly on Acacia trees for long periods, or rode on the back of grazing cows, whereas the Bank Myna mostly on the ground, sometimes picking up crumbs strewn by people in the vicinity. While the Myna flew swiftly and actively chased the cricket, the King Crow either patiently waited for the luckless victim to chance within their grasp or sallied out from selected perches in quest of the winged insect. The prey caught in the beak was carried on a branch of tree, torn to pieces and devoured.

It was an interesting spectacle to observe Myna showing much cunning in locating, stalking and spearing the prey even in the crevice in their striking reach. The Myna could easily perceive even slight movement of the cricket. While the cricket remained comparatively safe from attack as long as it remained motionless often assuming a most innocent and innocuous posture, its slightest movement sealed its fate.

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Observations on the Southern Coucal Centropus sinensis feeding on the saw-scaled viper Echis carinatus, by B.Venugopal, Research Scholar, Dept. of Zoology, University of Calicut, Kerala-673 635: On 27.1.1981 at noon I was following a Southern Coucal. At 12.36 it spotted a saw-scaled viper. Immediately the bird jumped and ran after the snake. On reaching the snake it began pecking at the snakes head. Finally it managed to kill the snake. Then it began slowly swallowing the snake, with the head-end of the snake first. The process of swallowing took about 35 minutes (from 12.48 to 13.23). It was observed that the Coucal swallowed the snake only when the former was on the ground. In the midst of swallowing, when I chased the bird in order to have a good view, it flew to a nearby tree with the half-swallowed snake. There it perched for about 8 minutes without swallowing. The swallowing action was resumed only after the bird descended to the ground.

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Stop Press from Oryx: Record-breaking Sponsored Birdwatch: The British record for bird species spotted in a single day was broken on May 11 (after Oryx had gone to press) by teams from ffPS and Country Life magazine, competing in a sponsored birdwatch. Country Life won 146-143, both scores

exceeding the record of 133 set last year, also by Country Life. In all, 159 species were listed, and each bird had to be seen by all members of the team.

ffPS was represented by John Gooders, author of several books on birds; Cliff Waller, Warden of Walberswick National Nature Reserve; Tim Inskipp of the Wildlife Trade Monitoring Unit; and Bill Oddie, best known as one of BBC's The Goodies but also an experienced ornithologist. Between bird number one, a tawny owl at 3.25 am, and a barn owl at 10 pm, the team covered about 300 miles of East Anglia, using an Aston-Martin donated by the manufacturer.

Country Life, led by David Tomlinson, the magazine's Assistant Editor, started at Bampton Cliff in Yorkshire and eventually drove 600 miles, but trailed for most of the day until reaching the RSPB reserve at Snettisham, where spoonbill, garganey, whimbrel, scaup and short-eared owl took the team well into the 140s and the lead. Country Life also saw the day's rarest species, two glossy ibis at Minsmere.

The event raised about £3000 for various wildlife charities, including the Oryx 100 % Fund, and will be repeated next year. Further details will be published in the September Oryx.

Editor: Zafar Futehally

Dodda Gubbi Post, Via, Vidyanagar, Bangalore - 562 134

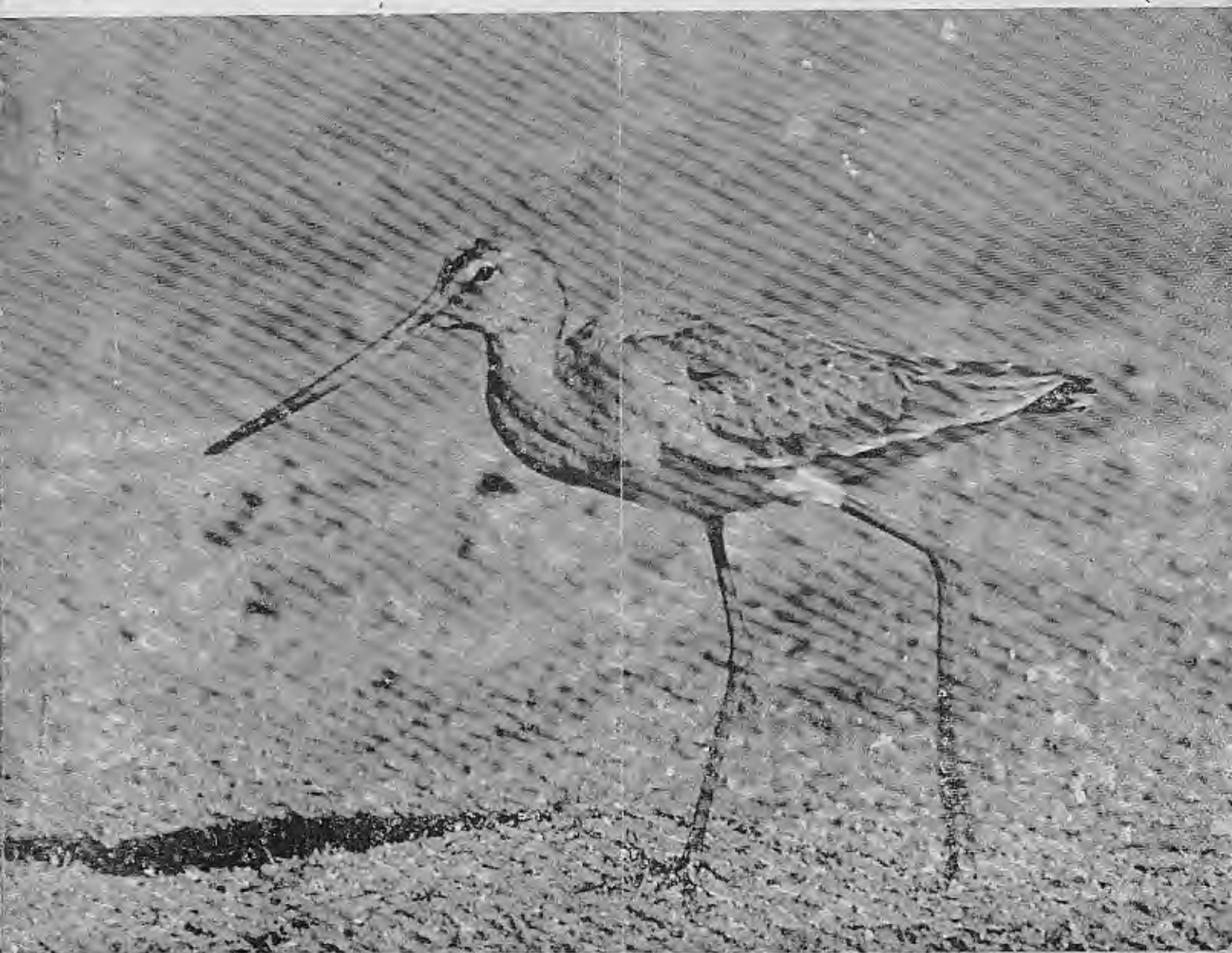
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Cover Picture: Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

Photo by: E. Hanumantha Rao

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FOR BIRDWATCHERS

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Editorial

A request to subscribers: Every year I make a resolution to ensure that the Newsletter is correctly addressed and mailed to all subscribers. A change in staff in my one man office has resulted in great confusion. Will all of you who wish to subscribe to the Newsletter in 1982 please send in your subscriptions NOW; and would you kindly write in your addresses with the pin code on a separate piece of paper which I will file appropriately. Many thanks.

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Duration of the Newsletter: I was gratified to find that many subscribers insist on continuing the Newsletter on a monthly bases. I will try and do so, but this will partly depend on the number of subscribers in 1982, advertisements, donations, and the secretarial help I am able to muster. There have been many kind offers but much of the work has necessarily to be done by me and my assistant. At the moment the assistant is not in sight.

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Birding in Kerala by Oliver M. Ashford, 4 Treble House, Blewbury, Didcot, Oxfordshire OK 119 NZ, U.K.: Last February my wife and I had the good fortune to spend 12 days birding in Kerala with Professor K.K. Neelakantan of Trivandrum and Dr. Anna Mani of Bangalore. If our object had been to see as many different birds as possible in the time available, we would doubtless have had to spend many weary hours driving along hot dusty roads. Rather than that, we decided to concentrate our efforts on just two locations, Ponnudi and Thekkady. Even so we identified about 160 different species, which itself gives some indication of the richness of bird life in Kerala. In the present article, I will limit myself to some of the highlights of the trip.

Ponnudi is a hill station, about 40 miles by road (good surface all the way) from Trivandrum, our base. By setting out early in the morning, we were able to hear and see a lot of bird activity on the way, especially after entering the forest beyond Kallar. Two well-signposted picnic areas by the river looked full of promise

and this was fulfilled when we returned later at leisure. For us, one of the most exciting birds here was the Fairy Bluebird, notable for its varied calls, usually of two notes, as well as for its fine colouring. We were also attracted by the flycatchers, drongos and bulbuls. The beautiful 4-5 note song of the Rubythroated Yellow Bulbul, which I had not previously encountered, was heard repeatedly but the bird itself was tantalisingly hard to pick out in the dense foliage. As so often happens, once I had been shown my first, I had little difficulty in seeing several more. We also had a clear but fleeting view of a Grey headed Bulbul, not so colourful as its relative but somehow more elegant.

From the second picnic spot a trail climbs several miles through the jungle up towards the Ponnudi Resthouse. On one occasion we followed it some distance and were rewarded for our efforts by our first Whitethroated Ground Thrush, remarkable for its black and white face pattern. Later we watched one of these birds vigorously stirring up some dead leaves in search of food. Nearby was a fruit-laden tree which attracted birds of several species; the commonest was the Yellowbrowed Bulbul, but there was also a Blueheaded Rock Thrush, some brilliant orioles and another White-throated Ground Thrush. The area is also good for woodpeckers, some of which are easier to separate by their calls rather than by their appearance. This applies to the Malabar Goldenbacked Threetoed Woodpecker (why cannot we devise a less clumsy English nomenclature for these birds?), whose screams were heard several times before we finally had a clear view of one climbing up a tree trunk. We also had our first glimpse of a small Yellownaped Woodpecker (we were later to see one being harassed at its nest by a Jungle Myna). Calling from a distance was a Plaintive Cuckoo, so aptly named.

The Resthouse is prominently located on open ground above the forest and we regretted that the new buildings did not blend better with the magnificent landscape. Fortunately the staff match the landscape rather than the architecture; rarely have I been so well looked after. The grounds command a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside with ridge after ridge of mountains, each becoming fainter in the distance until the land finally merges with the sky. It seemed to be an ideal place for observing raptors, but the few that we saw proved difficult to identify. For example, the harriers were mainly female which to me are so alike that I am reluctant to give them

a specific name. There was the occasional Black Eagle, one of which was seen chasing a pair of buzzards (probably Desert Buzzards?). The Booted Eagles were relatively easy to identify, thanks to their white underwings with black trailing edges. Easier still were the Blackwinged Kites, one of which had greeted us on our arrival at Trivandrum airport.

Beyond the Resthouse the road continues for only a mile or two to the ruins of an old building; from there one can walk for miles across open hilly country in all directions. With the increase in altitude the number of birds became fewer and even in some luxuriant sholas we saw little apart from numerous Black Bulbuls and a solitary Small Sunbird, readily distinguished from its relatives by its size alone. Overhead we saw some Alpine Swifts, surely one of the most effortless fliers of them all. At dusk and at dawn we heard the mechanical engine-line Chuk-oo, Chuk-oo, Chuk-oo of the Jungle Nightjar but the light was too poor for seeing them well.

On our second day we went by car to some tea and rubber estates just off the main road. Here we were at first disappointed but then, suddenly, we were in among the birds, several of which were new. A Southern Treepie flew across the valley displaying its enormous black and white tail. For sheer beauty, however, there was nothing to beat the numerous Bluewinged Parakeets, their pale heads and underparts contrasting with their blue wings and tails. A male Greyfronted Green Pigeon obligingly let us study the delicate tone of the green of its lower parts and the maroon of its back and wings. More difficult to see was a Speckled Piculet, distinguished from the Pygmy Woodpecker (which we saw later in Thekkady) by having dark spots on its lower parts rather than streaks. By this time a Black Eagle was quartering the shola on the hillside, looking for its breakfast; it sailed majestically over the treetops without a single flap of its wings.

One morning we set out before dawn and had some excellent views of the nightjars sitting on the road, their eyes reflecting our car headlights. This is also the time of day to see the Indian Pitta by the roadside; we were able to approach quite close in the car before they became disturbed and were thus able to appreciate the wonderful range of their colours. We never saw these birds later in the day - only the early birder gets the Pitta! We also heard a loud whistled rendering of 'London's burning' and after some searching we found the performer,

none other than the Malabar Whistling Thrush. Shortly after entering the jungle we left the car and continued down the hill to the picnic spot on foot. Birds were singing all around us but without Professor Neelakantan's expert guidance we would never have been able to sort them out. It was he who identified the call of the Malabar Trogon and then showed us the bird, sitting on a branch, almost invisibly camouflaged in spite of its brilliant red underparts.

We broke our journey back to Trivandrum for a walk up the river at Kallar. The biotope looked right for kingfishers and sure enough we ultimately picked out our one and only Blackcapped Kingfisher sitting on a rock, enjoying its fish breakfast. Our route then took us north to Kottayam where we spend the night before an early morning start for Thekkady. On a good surface this 80-mile stretch could be covered easily in a couple of hours, in spite of all the hills and curves; unfortunately road works were in progress (very slow progress!) most of the way. The resulting combination of dust, fumes and bumps made the journey something of a 4-hour nightmare but it was worth it, for Thekkady is not only beautiful but also full of birds.

The very comfortable hotel, Aranya Nivas, is surrounded by trees through which one can just catch a glimpse of the vast artificial lake. Here there is little need for a car as a great variety of biotopes - jungle, lakeshore, meadow and stream - can easily be explored on foot. And of course the best time to do this is in the early morning. As we set out on our first such walk, both Barred Jungle Owlet and Collared Scops Owl were still calling and a Whitenecked Stork could just be seen against the brightening sky, standing on its nest ready to fly off in search of food for its four young. But our biggest thrill was to occur while we were standing in an open grass-covered valley with jungle on either side. Grey Junglefowls were making a great din all along the edge of the trees and dozens of Grey Hornbills were flying across the valley, flapping their wings several times and then gliding. Suddenly we heard a swishing sound and, looking up, we saw an enormous bird crossing the meadow and making an audible swish each time it flapped its wings. It landed on the same banyan tree as some of the Grey Hornbills and proceeded to devour vast quantities of fruit. The pied colouring and large casqued bill told us that we were watching our first Great Indian Hornbill. Hardly had we recovered from the shock when three large black birds with white rumps and underparts flew over; they were the only Great Black

Woodpeckers that we saw on the whole trip. During a lull in all this excitement I turned my binoculars onto some pipits. There seemed to be two separate species, the smaller ones being mousy brown and the larger distinctly tawny, but in the end I lumped them all together as subspecies of Richard's Pipit - the astute reader will already have deduced that I am not very interested in subspecies.

One of the main tourist attractions of Thekkady is the 2-3 hour boat trip to the dam and back, looking out for wild animals. On this trip the commonest birds were the Darters, standing on branches of dead trees with their wings held out to dry in the early morning sun. Otherwise we saw little of interest apart from a Storkbilled Kingfisher (what a bill!), several Ospreys and a Pallid Harrier - a splendid male, at last. On our way back two elephants swam across the lake just in front of us and displayed their displeasure at our intrusion by making some terrifying noises after landing safely on the other side.

To me, the most fascinating outings in Thekkady were the jungle walks, during which we were in the safe hands of an excellent tracker kindly provided by the Assistant Wildlife Officer. With a group of five it proved difficult to remain silent for long, but how worth while it was when we succeeded! It was thus that we heard a slight rustling among some dead leaves on the jungle floor. Then we picked out the birds and finally, as they walked along a fallen tree trunk, we saw from the chestnut cap and the heavily spotted underparts that they were Spotted Babblers. Shortly afterwards we had a similar encounter with a group of Wynaad Laughing Thrushes, distinguished by their chestnut wings and back and the grey breast contrasting with the white throat. Many birds are more spectacular than these skulking forest species but none can provide a greater thrill. Another jungle thrill came when Dr. Mani pointed out a black bird sitting near the top of a tree. I saw a black crest and some black and white bars on the breast and concluded that it must be a Blackcrested Baza, which would have been a life bird for Professor Neelakantan. But he was some distance away at the time and the bird had flown before he could join us. Thanks to some skillful stalking, he eventually picked one out and then, to cap it all, a flock of four flew past just above the treetops. A few minutes later, crossing the meadow on our way back to the hotel, we flushed a large snipe, or was it a woodcock? We carefully noted its shape, size, behaviour

and markings and from the books we decide that it must have been a Wood Snipe. This was confirmed next day when we saw what was presumably the same bird at close quarters.

I would like to feel that these inadequate notes on two wonderful locations will encourage other birders to visit them. Good birding!

Bird Watching in Japan by Aamir Ali. 14 ch. de la Tourelle. 1209 Geneva: Everything that one does in Japan has a special flavour - and I am not merely referring to the eating of raw fish. Shopping, going to a restaurant, having a hair cut, taking a bus, walking in the park - they are all a little different from anywhere else. And so with birdwatching.

I was spending a week in Tokyo in early October and had an introduction from Salim Ali to Yoshimaro Yamashina, Director of the Yamashina Institute of Ornithology. I had also got hold of a copy (borrowed) of Dr. Yamashina's Birds in Japan. (By pure coincidence, a few days after I got back to Geneva, when trying to clear out some old copies of the BNHS Journal to gain more shelf space, I saw that Dr. Yamashina had contributed an article on Quail Breeding in Japan to the April 1961 issue of the Journal. (Incidentally, of course I didn't manage to gain any shelf space but spent a pleasant couple of hours in not achieving anything.)).

As a result of the introduction, Mr. Masashi Yoshii, Chief, Bird Migration Centre of the Yamashina Institute came to fetch me on Sunday morning. Forty five minutes by local train and bus brought us to the Ooi Bird Sanctuary. This is a very special and interesting place. The Wild Bird Society of Japan and some other conservation groups persuaded the Tokyo government to develop the area as a sanctuary. The government reclaimed some 3.26 hectares of land, planted 14,000 trees and bushes of 90 different species. The sanctuary was opened in 1978 and is managed by the Wild Bird Society. It receives about 25,000 people a year, and on Sundays there are often over 700. 95 species of birds have been recorded and 6 have nested there.

It is situated within city limits. There are factories on the outskirts, a huge elevated super highway being completed on one side, the Haneda airport and the sea

nearby. So when you are trying to focus on a Black tailed Gull, you are just as likely to find yourself admiring a Boeing 707 about to land, or a freighter moving lesiurely along, its funnels and masts showing above the reeds. The Wild Bird Society wants to enlarge the sanctuary to about 70 hectares, presumably by reclaiming more land.

Incidentally, isn't this sort of mini-sanctuary a possibility in India? In Switzerland there seems to be a move to turn abandoned quarries and other such unlikely places into natural reserves. Given a few years respite, nature asserts itself again forcefully in these desecrated areas.

To turn to Ooi. At the entrance there's the headquarters with the inevitable shop. (We were glad to see that Mr. Yoshii's book was on sale.) There is also a sort of large circular barricade with embrasures at various heights. It looked like one of those forts you see in western films from which the US cavalry shoots down the naughty Indians who treacherously resist the taking over of their habitat by palefaces. Some of these embrasures were already armed with telescopes placed there for the public to use, others had birdwatchers glued to them with their own binoculars.

In front was a pond usually harbouring many waterfowl; now, it was almost empty because some rogue school boy had frightened them off - most un-Japanese behaviour.

Mr. Yoshii's task was to deliver me to a birdwatching group that was having its Sunday outing in the sanctuary. The group had gone on ahead, so we went after them. Mr. Yoshii identifying the call of a Bull-headed Shrike, *Lanius bucephalus*, on the way. This is one of the six species that has bred in the sanctuary. It is not mentioned in the Handbook so presumably is not found in India.

I was expecting a group of eight or ten persons, but as we caught up with them, I saw a vast concourse of perhaps seventy people. They were all ages, 7 to 70, male and female, fat and thin, tall and short. The universal identification sign of a birdwatcher is of course the pair of binoculars slung around his neck. The Japanese species had a further diagnostic sign - a telescope and tripod carried on the shoulder. There must have been more lens power concentrated in that area than on a Saudi Arabian AWACS plane.

Mr. Yoshii introduced me to a young fisheries student, Kari Nokiyo Taka, whose duty it became to look after me most solicitously. But, alas, his english was almost as limited as my Japanese. I was also immediately introduced to the one foreigner who was with the group, a young englishman called Jonas (Jones?) He had spent three years in Japan and was immediately appointed Lord High Interpreter. He was a journalist writing a book about places around Tokyo to visit on weekends, which is why he was on this outing. So, though his Japanese was good, it did not stretch to the names of birds.

Everyone was helpful and friendly and this manifested itself in important practical terms when lunchtime came along and I was the only one without a picnic.

From the birding point of view, it was not a particularly outstanding outing. I saw about 18-20 species. When I first came upon the group, one platoon of about 25 watchers was concentrated on a clump of trees. An Arctic warbler, *Phylloscopus borealis*, was obligingly flitting about and remained there long enough to give everyone a chance of looking at it. It looked like any other warbler, but its special call (which I didn't hear) identified it. The Arctic warbler is mentioned, though not illustrated, in the Handbook, and is presumably a winter visitor to India.

Mostly we concentrated on water birds. The most common was the Black tailed Gull, *Larus crassirostris*, with a black band across the tail and a yellow bill tipped in red and black. The Japanese name for this is 'umi neko' which means 'sea cat' because it mews like a cat. It really does. I was told that this gull was specifically Japanese. I did not find mention of it in the Handbook or in the Field Guides for Europe or the eastern United States; however, it is referred to in the Guide to Birds of eastern America as being found in Japan and China, and as an accidental in California.

There were also Black headed Gulls, which are the common ones around Geneva.

Greenshanks were fairly common. One of them had got entangled in a bit of fishing line left lying around - next to birdwatching, fishing was the most popular pastime at Ooi. It was caught and disentangled and then taken off to the ranger's office as its leg had been damaged by the twine. Incidentally several members of the birdwatching

group were busy picking up bits of fishing line and other debris which might cause difficulties for birds or disfigure the sanctuary.

We saw a Chinese Little Bittern, *Ixobrychus sinensis*, standing motionless among the reeds; small, yellowish brown with a black head. Amongst other birds seen were Teals, Coots, Night Herons, Pintails, Dabchicks, Snipes, Little Egrets. Once a flock of about eight Little Egrets rose and flew in formation, white against the blue autumn sky, looking just like a Japanese painting. Cries of Kiray desu neh, kiray desu neh, broke out from several of the group: Isn't it beautiful!

In mid afternoon, the whole group sat down quietly on the ground while two experts talked to them about the birds they had seen. Everyone made assiduous notes.

And then some started homewards while others went off to try their luck in another part of the sanctuary.

Domo arigato gozaimashita.

Bird Watching in Dubai by Ashok Kumar, Al-Futtaim Tower Scaffolding, P.O. Box 5502, Dubai, U.A.E.: When I first came to Dubai from India two years ago, if someone had suggested that serious birdwatching was possible in this desert, I would have thought him touched in the head. Admittedly, one saw a fair number of Rock Pigeons (*Columba livia*) but these were domesticated or feral. Around the souqs, bazaars that is and elsewhere House sparrows were numerous, but once again that did not amount to great bird watching. I even missed the thieving common crows (*Corvus splendens*) which were so numerous as to be a nuisance near my last home in India and to whom I often lost my breakfast eggs. The only wild bird to be seen around Dubai in some numbers was a Dove. The description came closest to what we call the Little Brown Dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*) but the miniature 'Chessboard' pattern on either side of the neck as seen in the Indian specimens was replaced here by a crescent shaped pattern of black dots just below the throat. In some birds these dots were absent or barely visible. I assumed this bird to be another specie of Dove not known to us in India. Some months later I found this bird displayed in the Dubai Zoo described as the Palm Dove, and to my surprise bearing the same latin name as the Little Brown Dove. To me the variation in neck marking pattern

appeared sufficiently different requiring classification of the Palm Dove as a separate subspecies. Unfortunately, I could not carry out the comparison in greater detail, and hope to do that one of these days.

It was in March this year that I was able to get in touch with a few other birdwatchers and learn that the Gulf was an important staging point on the migration route of birds crossing over from Europe to Africa for winter. It was then that I discovered that in the winter months the United Arab Emirates is quite rich in bird life.

One of the most interesting spots for birdwatching is the Saffa park of Dubai. The park was established a few years ago by overlaying desert sand with soil brought from outside. Manure and water has to be heavily applied to sustain the park which is mainly a grassland with a few scattered young trees and bushes. Just as the park attracts human holiday makers by the thousand during winter months, it attracts migrating birds as well. Before the park was built, the birds must have stopped wherever they could find a little food and water which must have been scarce. Now the park provides them with insects to eat and also seeds of various grasses and shrubs. The park is profusely watered by sprinklers. For identification the most useful book is 'Birds of Britain and Europe with North Africa and the Middle East' (Collins). As many species from the Indian subcontinent are also to be seen a book on Indian birds is equally necessary.

One morning, I was admiring the vast stretch of gold and green grass on which dew was glistening in early sun. Suddenly a small cloud of yellow descended in front of me. This was a mixed party of wagtails, Blue headed, Yellow and Citrine - *Motacilla flava* and *citrea*. In this country we also get the more common White Wagtail (*M. alba*) in winter months. These are seen inside the towns wherever there is a patch of grass and water, but at least in one instance on the roof of a high rise building in downtown Dubai. A leaky water pipe attracted a pair to that place several times a day.

If an industrial designer and a colour consultant were asked to use all their imagination and vivid hues to create a beautifully designed, colourful bird, I do not think they could improve upon the Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*) which combines in wonderful harmony blue, green, red, lemon, orange, brown and many intermediate shades.

Then there is the striking mascara line through the eye and on the throat. Frankly, I had not hoped to see a bird such as this in the desert. Yet there they were about six in number one morning at the Saffa Park perched on an Accacia, and quite truly it looked as if the tree had been festooned with multicoloured lights. In UAE, we also get the Blue -Cheeked Bee-eater (*M. superciliosus*) which has more subtle colouring, and the Little green Bee-eater (*M. orientalis*) familiar to us in India.

Of other birds common to India, the Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*) is of great interest to Arabs being a part of their lore. It is to be seen throughout the winter. Common mynahs (*Acridotheres tristis*) have been seen nesting in the Saffa Park in April this year. India Rollers (*Coracias benghalensis*) make their appearance with the advent of the cold season and remain with us almost till June. The south migration begins in September. It brings numerous species of Warblers, Chats, Wheatears, Pippits Larks, Shrikes, Swallows and Swifts.

There is a small pond in the middle of the park. When the migration is on, one does not know what one may see next on its surface. At various times I have seen the Garganey Teal, Sandpiper, Squacco Heron, Little Bittern and lately a solitary Dabchick though I am a little doubtful on identification of that. The group I go bird watching with report seeing many more ducks and waders in this pond including a Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) on one occasion. Geese certainly overfly United Arab Emirates while on migration. If fresh water lakes had existed, they could possibly stop here for a while. Birds certainly make use of all newly planted parks, gardens and even traffic islands which have been turfed in recent years.

The upper end of the Dubai creek which has shallow waters and mudflats is extensively used by waders in the cool season. Last year it was used by over 200 Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*). It was a real joy to be able to see Flamingos on the outskirts of Dubai town. My bird watching friends in Dubai (we are a total of five) have made an astonishing large list at the Dubai creek where so far I personally have spent very little time. Instead of giving the list here, I am sending one copy of all the birds reported to have been seen in the Gulf to your editor and also to BNHS. The list is somewhat long and I doubt if your editor will find space for it. Those seriously interested could perhaps ask to see the list.

It is possible that I may have conveyed the impression that this place is a bird watchers paradise. Nothing could be further from the truth. For the most part of the year, all we see in this harsh desert are Palm Doves, Sparrows and ofcourse the Crested Lark (*Galerida cristata*) which is perhaps a true daughter of the desert. At the height of summer, in raging sand storms when no other form of life is visible, I have seen Crested Larks battle the winds. Barring waders, Gulls and Terns, all the other birds mentioned by me are seen in ones and twos for the most part, and that too in a few locations only. The situation is further confused by the fact that it is believed that local Arabs purchase a number of imported birds and release them. Some of these will survive for a while, but some others manage to establish themselves in the wild. The extent of this practice is not fully known though a local bird dealer has agreed to let me be involved when his next consignment of birds arrives from Bangkok. In June this year, in a park in the town of Abu Dhabi (capital of UAE) I observed a Bulbul which had a red vent. Yet the bird was different in many ways to our Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*). For one thing the head was not black but brown like the rest of the body. Two fledgelings were also seen denoting breeding in June. The mystery was solved when I came across a reference that the Red-vented Bulbul having escaped from cages is becoming locally established and hybridising with local species. The local species of Bulbul I have seen on one occasion is *P.Xanthopygos*, or was it *barbatus*?

Ras-Al-Khaima and Fujairah are two towns at the northern and eastern end of United Arab Emirates. Both these places have extensive date palm groves and some farming as well. Birds are more numerous here. Common crows and Indian rollers are to be seen the year round. But what surprised me was seeing the Purple Sun Bird (*Nectarina asiatica*) in breeding plumage in June this year at Ras-Al-Khaima. Surely June is not the breeding season, but the male was distinctly in breeding plumage. Another Indian bird resident and breeding in this country in palm groves of east coast is the Grey Partridge (*Francolinus pondicerianus*). Whether it is a case of escapees become locally established, I cannot say. But in two parks outside Dubai this partridge was introduced and appears to be breeding. Rose-ringed parakeets which are brought here in cages by the hundreds by air travellers from Bombay, have established themselves in the wild and are said to be breeding in the crowns of palm trees. Natural occurrence of this parakeet in this region is only in Iraq which is quite far from UAE.

In the last few years a fair amount has been done in this country towards creation of greenery. The oasis town of Al-Ain has more parks than an average Indian town. All this must have an effect on the pattern of migration since transit halts are now available. Unfortunately this is not being studied scientifically by comprehensive observations and ringing. As to the very large number of species which have been recorded here, the only explanation is that apart from migration from Europe to Africa, there is some migration from the Indian subcontinent as well. Yet it remains a mystery and an enigma to be resolved one day as to the reason why the Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*), perhaps the ultimate in audio-visual beauty or the Sunbird which must live on nectar of flowers find it worthwhile to visit what is essentially a dreary desert.

A list of birds seen on a mornings outing at the Saffa Park on March 20th, 1981 is given below. This was when the migrants were on their return journey.

SAFFA PARK 20.3.81 0630 HRS. TO 0950 HRS

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. Garganey Fem. | One. Ref. Peterson, Mountfort, Hoolom. |
| | Birds of Britain and Europe. |
| 2. Squacco Heron | One. |
| 3. Purple Heron | One. |
| 4. Common Sandpiper | One. |
| 5. Palm or Laughing Dove | Numerous. |
| 6. Swift | Numerous. |
| 7. Hoopoe | Eight. |
| 8. Wryneck | One. |
| 9. Sandmartin | One in company with Juv. Swallows. |
| 10. Swallow | Twenty + All in Juvenile plumage. |
| 11. Richard's Pipit | Two. |
| 12. Tawny Pipit | Numerous. |
| 13. Yellow Wagtail | Four. |
| 14. Blue Headed Wagtail | Three. |
| 15. Black Headed Wagtail | Twentyeight. |
| | All the above Wagtails were in one party. |
| 16. Pied/White Wagtail | One. |
| 17. Grey Wagtail | Many. |
| 18. Blue Throat | Two. |
| 19. Black Redstart | Five. |
| 20. Redstart | Three Pairs. |
| 21. Stonechat | Three Pairs + |
| 22. Isabelline Wheatear | Numerous. |
| 23. Wheatear | Six+ |
| 24. Desert Wheatear | Three+ |

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 25. | Mourning Wheatear | Two |
| 26. | Hooded Wheatear | Three+ |
| 27. | Hume's Wheatear | Definitely One |
| 28. | Song Thrush | Three+ |
| 29. | Black Crowned Finch Lark | Pair |
| 30. | Desert Lark | Up to ten. Some pale subspecies present. |
| 31. | Crested Lark | Very numerous. |
| 32. | Red Backed Shrike | One. |
| 33. | Isabelline Shrike | One. |
| 34. | Lesser Grey shrike | One. |
| 35. | Greater Grey Shrike | One. |
| 36. | Woodchat Shrike | One. |
| 37. | Ortolan Bunting | One. |
| 38. | Fan Tailed Warbler | One. |
| 39. | White Throat | Three+ |
| 40. | Black Cap | One. |
| 41. | Chiffchaff (Phyl. collybita abietinus) | Killed by children B.T.O. Guide #2 (Warbler) |
| 42. | Common Mynah. | Three+ |
| 43. | House Sparrow | Numerous |

There were many species of warbler present but identification was not possible.

Observers-(Alphabetical Order)

A. Kumar.
G. A. Miles
M. Stew.
M. West.

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|------|
| 44. | Masked Shrike | One. |
| 45. | Cinereous Bunting | One. |
-

Editor: Zafar Futehally

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Cover Picture: Blacktailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)

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